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Newsnotes

Publications

Books

A Spanish translation of the first biography of Saint Vincent de Paul has recently been published. *Vida del Venerable Siervo de Dios Vicente de Paúl, fundador y primer Superior General de la Congregación de la Misión*. Por Monseñor Luis Abelly, Obispo de Rodez. Traducción al español por el P. Martín Abaitua Churruca, C.M. Prólogo de Jaime Corera, C.M. Editorial CEME, Salamanca, Spain, 1994. 814 pages.

A new book *La religion des pauvres: Les sources du christianisme modern, XVIIe-XIXe siècles* by Louis Châtelier (Paris: Aubier, 1993), provides valuable background for understanding Vincentian missionary activity in France in the seventeenth century. The author believes that missionaries tailored the Christian message to the mental receptivity of the country people of western and central Europe. As a result there was a town-by-town, region-by-region growth of religious identity.

Of special interest to sisters is a new work by Marjorie Noterman Beane, *From Framework to Freedom: A History of the Sister Formation Conference* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993. Pp. xii, 158. \$37.50). The book highlights the role played by Sister Bertrande Meyers, D.C., in the development and growth of the Sister Formation Conference.

Journals

Father Emeric Amyot d'Inville, C.M., secretary general of the Congregation of the Mission, has been appointed editor of *Nuntia*, the international news journal of the Congregation. He will be assisted on the editorial board by Fathers Lauro Palu, C.M., and Italo Zedde, C.M., both assistants to the superior general. Father Amyot d'Inville was also recently appointed editor of *Vincentiana*, with Fathers Ignacio Fernández de Mendoza, C.M., and Thomas Davitt, C.M., helping as members of the editorial board.

In *Vincentiana*, number 193 (May-June 1994) are three articles of note: "La espiritualidad vincenciana del Laico Vincenciano" by Father J. Ignacio Fernández de Mendoza, C.M.; "Identidad de los ministerios de la Congregación de la Misión" by Father Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M.; and "The Maternal Face of Jesus—A Note on Vincent de Paul" by Father Robert P. Maloney, C.M. Numbers 194-195 (July-October 1994) contain the following studies: "Monsieur Vincent, homme d'équilibre" by Jean-Pierre Renouard, C.M.; "L'Image de la Coquille chez Monsieur Vincent" by Gerard van Winsen, C.M.; "L'Oeuvre des Lazaristes dans les Balkans" by Yves Danjou, C.M.; "La Congregación de la Misión ejemplo de sociedad de Vida Apostólica" by Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M.; "Espiritualidad Misionera de San Vicente a la luz de la '*Redemptoris Missio*'" by Orestes Ortiz, C.M.; "Carità Cristiana e Società odierna" by Giuseppe Turati, C.M., "Itinéraire de Monsieur Vincent. Des Malheurs du temps à la Mission (1)" by Bernard Koch, C.M.; "Au Pays de M. Pouget" by André Sylvestre, C.M. The same issue contains a reprint of "The Extended Vincentian Family—A Genealogical Prospective—An Overview of the VSI Family Tree Project" by Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., which first appeared in *Vincentian Heritage*, volume 15, number 1.

Recent issues of *Colloque*, the journal of the Irish province of the Congregation of the Mission, have carried a number of important articles on Vincent de Paul and his Community. Number 29 (Spring 1994) contains the following: "St Vincent's Ideas on Retreats" by Thomas Davitt, C.M.; "St Vincent and the Will of God" by Richard McCullen, C.M.; "The Unitive Way: the Vincentian Way" by M. Rearden, C.M.; "St Vincent and the French School" by A. Spelman, C.M.; "Some Addenda on John Joseph Lynch, by Thomas Davitt, C.M.; and "The Maternal Face of Jesus: a Note on Vincent de Paul" by Robert P. Maloney, C.M. That same number also reprints the article "Becoming a Bishop and Remaining a Vincentian: the Struggles of Archbishop John Joseph Lynch, C.M.," by Richard Kehoe, C.M., which first appeared in *Vincentian Heritage*, vol. XIII, no. 2. Number 30 of *Colloque* (Autumn 1994) has a translation by Father Thomas Davitt, C.M., of the Saint Vincent de Paul's conference of 6 December 1658 on the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission. Other articles are J. P. Renouard, C.M., "St Vincent de Paul and the Word of God," E. Flanagan, "St Vincent on Temptation," Father Davitt on "Vincent de Paul and England," and Mark Noonan, C.M., on "The 150th Anniversary of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland."

The *Echoes of the Company*, numbers 7-8 (July-August 1994), has three articles dedicated to the fourth centenary of the birth of Maguerite Naseau, whom Vincent de Paul considered to be the first Daughter of Charity. The same issue contains the third part of an article by Sister Rene Lelandais, D.C., on the Daughters of Charity martyred during the Spanish Civil war.

Bibliography

Father Benito Martínez, C.M., has recently sent to the printer a new bibliography of Saint Louise de Marillac. The manuscript includes the French and Spanish concordance of her writings, an abundant bibliography, and an index of themes. It will be published by CEME, the Vincentian publishing house in Salamanca.

Beatification

The *Positio*, or combination biography and historical study for the beatification cause of Sister Rosalie Rendu, prepared by Father Philippe Roche, C.M., of the province of Paris, has been officially approved by a commission of six historians-consultors who met on 13 May 1994 at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The voting was unanimously favorable and positive.

Monsignor Ramón Echarren, the bishop of the Canary Islands, opened the process of canonization of Bishop Buenaventura Codina, C.M., on 6 January 1994. Codina arrived in that diocese in 1848 and died there on 18 November 1857. He was renowned for seminary reform, popular missions, and love of the poor. He was also extremely influential in the life and work of Saint Anthony María Claret, founder of the Claretians.

A New Approach: The Filles Séculières (1630-1660)*

By
Elizabeth Rapley

Modern historians of the Counter-Reformation in France agree to divide that event into two phases: the Counter-Reformation properly speaking, strongly influenced by the Mediterranean Catholicism that triumphed at Trent,¹ characterized by a highly adversarial approach to the questions that had been thrown up by Protestantism; and what is known as the Catholic Reformation, a period of genuine religious regeneration, during which the Church recognized, and moved to redress, the immense problems within itself.² The turning point between these two phases is generally placed around the beginning of the seventeenth century.³

But this "turning point," like most others, requires qualification. The atmosphere of violence and anxiety which fostered the Counter-Reformation spirit did not die with the conversion of Henri IV and the Edict of Nantes. The Protestant presence continued to cause severe, and often brutal, reaction. Even when non-violent, the defense of the faith was conducted largely through campaigns of apologetics, mounted by the great preaching congregations. On the other hand, the "Catholic Reformation," in the sense in which that term is usually employed, was not fully realized until later in the seventeenth century. The central drive of the Catholic Reformation was for the reform of the clergy, on which was predicated the christianization of the laity.⁴ This strategy was designed by the Council of Trent, but it was

*This is excerpted from Elizabeth Rapley *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montréal and Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). It is reprinted with the permission of the publisher. It has been adjusted to conform to the stylesheet of the Vincentian Heritage and the spelling has been americanized.

¹Pierre Chaunu, "Le XVII^e siècle religieux. Réflexions préalables," AESC (March-April 1967):291.

²See Jean Delemeau, *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire*, (Paris: PUF, 1971), chapter 4, "Christianisation"; René Taveneaux, *Le catholicisme dans la France classique*, 2 vols. (Paris: SEDES, 1980), 1: 27.

³See, for instance, J.-C. Dhôtel, *Les origines du catéchisme moderne, d'après les premiers manuels imprimés en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1967), 13.

⁴Paul Broutin, *La Réforme pastorale en France au XVII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1916-1933), 1: 20.

not implemented in France until a full century later. The French Church's program of structural reform had to wait for its financial recovery from the losses of the Reformation years. Only in the 1670s, with the setting-up of seminaries throughout the country, did clerical reform begin in earnest. In the meantime, much of France remained poorly served by its clergy. The *grand siècle*, writes one Church historian, was not the magnificent "moment" that has sometimes been depicted, but a period of severe and continuing crisis.⁵

Thus the first decades of the seventeenth century were a period during which the country's religious reformers gathered their forces and laid their foundations. This period had its own particular characteristics. It was the time of the "mystical invasion"—a sudden flowering of religious sentiment within French Catholic society. It was also the time of an extraordinarily high level of lay participation in religious affairs. An important part of the Church's work passed into the hands of the laity, at a time when there was a shortage of qualified priests.⁶ "Most priests stand aside with their arms crossed; God has had to raise up laymen—cutlers and mercers—to do the work of these idle priests."⁷ So wrote a great clerical reformer, Adrien Bourdoise.⁸ The laymen of whom he spoke were less likely to be cutlers and mercers than men of substance; but the point of his argument was correct. What is remarkable is that there existed a body of people capable of taking up this work. These were the *dévots*.

The *dévots* defined themselves, and were defined, in several ways. In its most general sense, the term simply described pious laymen, or, in the feminine gender, laywomen. But at the turn of the seventeenth century the *dévots* were also a religious party with a strong political purpose, under the leadership of Pierre (later Cardinal) Bérulle and Michel de Marillac, keeper of the seals to the crown. Spiritual descendants of the Holy League (indeed, many of them had been Leaguers), they represented the pure "Catholic" interest, and were therefore frequently at odds with the more pragmatic policies, first of Henri IV,

⁵Hermann Tuchle, C. A. Bouman, and Jacques Le Brun, *Réforme et Contre-Réforme in Nouvelle histoire de l'Église*, ed. L. J. Rogier, R. Aubert, and M. D. Knowles (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 3: 10.

⁶See Robert Mandrou, *Introduction à la France moderne 1500-1640* (Paris. Ed. Albin Michel, 1974), 273. "A good part of the movement of renewal during the years 1600-1640 was the work of the laity, and above all of devout women."

⁷Quoted in Allier, *La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrement de l'Autel: La "Cabale des Dévots," 1627-1666* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1902), 260.

⁸Adrien Bourdoise (d. 1655), founder of the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. See below, chapter 5.

then of Cardinal Richelieu. In particular they favored alliances with Catholic powers—Spain and Austria—and were appalled at the government's *rapprochement* with Protestant princes. Their political influence came to an end with the Day of Dupes, in 1630, when Richelieu finally drove his enemies from power. Thereafter, as state policy became ever more independent of religious considerations, they separated themselves from the “world,” which they now saw as intrinsically evil. *Dévots* took on the role of critics of society and guardians of its morality. Hence their battle against Protestants, libertines, atheists, actors, and every other type of deviant. Hence their conspicuously sober clothes, their theatrical services of reparation during carnival and other seasons of excess, and their unremitting battle against dueling, dancing, gaming, and the theater. For all their status and influence, they were only a small segment of French society, and they were cordially disliked by many for what was seen as their excessive, and foreign, religiosity.

Unfortunately for the *dévots*, their memory is enshrined for us in the brilliant satire created by one of their enemies. The Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement,⁹ the most powerful and political of all *dévo*t organizations, pursued the playwright Molière as a threat to public morality. His reprisal was *Tartuffe*. For three centuries audiences have been regaled with *Tartuffe*'s hypocrisy and prurience, and also with his hunger for power.¹⁰ But there was more to the *dévots* than *Tartuffe*. Their influence on their times was powerful and, in many ways, beneficial.

First and foremost, *dévots* were characterized by their interior religious fervor. “No Christian epoch,” writes one historian, “has been more penetrated by the supernatural than the beginning of the seventeenth century. . . . Never did Christian souls ponder more anxiously the ways of divine grace.”¹¹ They practiced spiritual discipline at a

⁹The Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, founded by the duc de Ventadour in 1630, was a secret association of laymen and priests whose purpose was “to embrace with zeal every kind of good purpose, and to procure the glory of God by every kind of means.” Its records show gypsy women locked away, a deist put into jail, a hermaphrodite banished from Paris, prostitutes prosecuted, butchers jailed for selling meat on Fridays—as well as continuing action against Protestants. On the other hand, it was active in a wide range of good works, including assistance to war-torn rural areas. See Comte René de Voyer d'Argenson, *Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*, publiées et annotées par le R. P. Dom H. Beauchet-Fillieau (Marseille, 1900), throughout.

¹⁰For more on the political overtones of *Tartuffe*, see Louis Châtellier, *L'Europe des dévots* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), 176ff.

¹¹Jean Dagens, *Bérulle et les origines de la Restauration catholique (1575-1611)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952), 129-30.

level hitherto unknown in laymen. They confessed frequently (a practice which had begun only with Trent), mortified their bodies, and read and meditated upon the many religious works that were now coming into print. Above all, following the advice of François de Sales given in the *Introduction à la vie dévote*, they found themselves spiritual directors, and developed the practice of methodical prayer. "This practice," writes Lucien Febvre, "which during the Middle Ages belonged to the convents . . . passed into the 'world.'" He argues that to it, more than anything else, can be attributed the intense religious fervor of the time.¹² *Dévots* aspired to an other-worldly life within the world. "Those who are simply good men trudge along God's road," wrote François de Sales, "but the devout run, and when they are truly devout, they fly."¹³

Part of the activity proper to the *dévo*t was good works. Indeed, it was this vocation that distinguished him from the other orders in society. In the seventeenth-century mind, charitable works were not the responsibility of the priest, still less of the religious. They fell to the layman and laywoman as their apportioned lot, the means of their salvation. "If you love the poor," wrote François de Sales to his *Philothée*, "spend time among them; take pleasure in having them at your home, and in visiting them at their home. . . . Make yourself their servant, go to serve them in their beds when they are sick, and do it with your own hands; be their cook at your own expense; be their sewing maid and their washerwoman."¹⁴

Many *dévots* undertook good works as part of their spiritual exercises.¹⁵ For those who found personal contact with the poor distasteful, there was alternative social action: organization, animation, fund-raising. It was in these fields that the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement and its branches in the provinces were most effective.

From the 1630s on, *dévo*t spirituality was, so to speak, bonded to good works. For the next thirty or forty years, the care of the poor, in all its diverse forms, bore the stamp of a particular mind-set that was

¹²L. Febvre, "Aspects mâconnus d'un renouveau religieux en France entre 1590 et 1620," *AESC* 13 (October-December 1958):641. See also Charles B. du Chesnay, "La spiritualité des laïcs," *XVII^e Siècle* 62-63 (1964):39.

¹³François de Sales to Mme. Présidente Brulart, 13 October 1604, in François de Sales, *Oeuvres complètes*, 25 vols. (Annecy: 1892-1908), 12: 347.

¹⁴François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote* (Paris: Nelson, 1947), part 3, chapter 15. This was clearly a counsel of perfection, seldom followed literally; but among those who did follow it were the first sisters of the Visitation, in the period before they were cloistered.

¹⁵Du Chesnay, "La spiritualité des laïcs," 36-8; 43-5.

other-worldly and yet highly practical. This mind-set, which saw poverty as an evil and the poor as social problems, was a far cry from the cheerful and undiscriminating charitable outlook of the Middle Ages.¹⁶ The social relationships of the seventeenth century were tinged with a highly pessimistic theology. "For the disciples of Bérulle," writes one historian, "nature, soiled by original sin, was fundamentally evil."¹⁷ The poor required assistance, training, and—above all—salvation. Their future was not in this world, but the next; true charity consisted not in pampering their bodies, but in salvaging their souls.

The new attitudes towards the poor did not spring from theology alone. It has been pointed out that the same general policies were developed in Protestant societies working from a different theological base. In its war on mendicancy, France was much closer in spirit to Protestant England than to Catholic Spain, where all efforts to enclose and correct beggars were resisted, well into the eighteenth century.¹⁸ The harsher social approach came to prevail where it had the *conjoncture* on its side. Economic and social conditions, the triumph of mercantilism and the passion for order in all things combined to change the attitude of the respectable classes towards their weaker brethren.

However, a powerful and influential section of the *dévot* movement continued to draw, at least partly, on the traditional idea of the poor as *alter Christus*—the other Christ. At the risk of overgeneralizing, it may be argued that this section represented the feminine point of view, while the other represented the masculine.

In French Catholic tradition, the exercise of charity towards the poor had always been a feminine prerogative. "In these parts this ministry is usually practiced by women," wrote François de Sales.¹⁹ Wives were entitled by law and custom to give alms on behalf of their husbands. They monopolized the field; indeed, it was the only field outside the home that they were allowed to monopolize.²⁰ However,

¹⁶Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres. L'exemple de la généralité de Lyon, 1534-1789* (Paris: PUF, 1974), 93-4.

¹⁷Pierre Deyon, "À propos du paupérisme au milieu du xvii^e siècle: peinture et charité chrétienne," *AESC* 22 (January-June, 1967):151.

¹⁸Gutton, *La société et les pauvres*, 111. For a discussion of contemporary English poor relief, see Valerie Pearl, "Puritans and Poor Relief: The London Workhouse, 1649-1660," in *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1978), 206-32.

¹⁹François de Sales to Jean-François Ranzo, 6 May 1610, *Oeuvres*, 14: 300.

²⁰Claude Dulong, *La vie quotidienne des femmes au grand siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1984), 266.

in the environment of the Catholic Reformation charity took on a higher profile, and pious laymen resolved to take their share. Consequently, the work was divided into two categories: the business of social control, in the sense of the supervision and training of the able-bodied poor, and charity pure and simple, such as the care of the sick and the obviously helpless. The former became the preserve of men, the latter of women. Throughout the century, each sex continued to dominate its own segment of charitable works.

It was under the auspices of the *dévotés* that the first charitable company of women—the Filles de la Charité—was born. These were, essentially, unmarried women or widows who wished to live together under one roof and dedicate themselves to good works. Their original purpose was to assist lay action, and they usually worked closely with other pious, but less committed, laywomen. The evolution and the expansion of the business of charity, however, laid a demand on them far beyond expectations. To meet this demand, they underwent organization and training, and became an officially recognized company.

Changing perceptions of poverty came first, from changes in poverty itself. The seventeenth century was indeed a "tragic century." At the end of the religious wars there was a short breathing space; then came what has been called a "climax of misery":²¹ bad harvests in 1629 and 1630, followed by bubonic plague; war in Lorraine, then in Picardie and Champagne. The years 1647-1648 and 1651-1652, also bad harvest years, were aggravated by the upheavals of the Fronde. These blows fell heavily upon the rural poor. Unable to survive the disorganization of their habitat, great numbers of people simply took to the road, migrating to cities that had no real means of absorbing them.

Poverty became highly visible. "One saw wandering troops of vagrants, without religion and without discipline, begging with more obstinacy than humility, often stealing what they could not otherwise get, gaining the public's attention by pretended infirmities, coming even to the foot of the altars to disturb the devotions of the faithful."²² These vagabond poor were despised by respectable people. They were "the sweepings of cities, the plague of Republics, gallows meat, from which come thieves, murderers, and all sorts of other good-for-nothing rascals."²³ They were feared, probably with cause, as

²¹Deyon, "À propos du paupérisme," 261.

²²Fléchier, "Oraison funèbre pour la duchesse d'Aiguillon," *Oeuvres complètes*, 10 vols. (Paris: 1828), 1: 59.

²³Henri Jadart, *Memoires de Jean Maillefer continués par son fils jusqu'en 1716* (Paris-Reims, 1890), 120.

being ripe for trouble. In 1649 the bourgeois of Paris complained officially: "The poor within our city walls are constantly planning frightful sedition, and the despair which is beginning to fill their hearts convinces them that there is no other remedy for their ills."²⁴

Behind these problem poor, whose wandering ways were equated in the seventeenth century with heresy, disease, and vice,²⁵ stood another class of poor who, though less visible, caused equal concern. These were the respectable poor. By contemporary definition, a man was respectably poor "who lives as a Christian, who cannot earn his livelihood and who blushes for shame when he is forced to beg."²⁶ For the majority of the poor who remained integrated into their towns and villages the danger of destitution was only too real. "Most of them have not enough to survive two days of sickness without assistance from the Hôtel-Dieu," wrote one civic official of the poor in his city.²⁷ The saturation of the labor market by incomers and the rising price of grain kept their numbers high. In 1651, at the peak of the troubles of the Fronde, one Parisian parish alone, Saint-Sulpice, identified 856 families, for a total of 2496 mouths, as, respectable poor.²⁸

A number of institutions already existed to handle the poor, but they were inadequate for present needs. The small country hospitals were mostly abandoned by the seventeenth century. The municipal *hôtels-dieu*, or hospitals, were run down and poorly maintained. *Bureau des pauvres* had been established during the previous century in many cities, but they usually existed in name only, without funds or buildings. Operations that continued to function did so only in a desultory way. The Couche of Paris, for instance, the institution for abandoned children, was maintained by a tax on the high justices of the city under the aegis of the chapter of Notre-Dame; but the children were neglected and abused nonetheless. "They were sold at eight sols apiece to beggars, who broke their arms and legs so that people would be induced to give them alms, and then let them die of hunger."²⁹

²⁴Les justes complaints des Bourgeois de Paris adressées à Messieurs de Parlement (Paris 1649), quoted in Marie-Andrée Jégou, *Les Ursulines du Faubourg Saint Jacques à Paris 1607-1662* (Paris: PUF, 1981), 101.

²⁵Gutton, *La société et les pauvres*, 11-13.

²⁶Ordre à tenir pour la visite des pauvres honteux, following the *Règlements de la Charité de Saint-Germain de l'Auxerrois*, quoted in Allier, *La "Cabale des dévots,"* 95.

²⁷René Bourgeois, quoted in Desportes, *Histoire de Reims* (Paris: Privat), 200.

²⁸Allier, *La "Cabale des dévots,"* 99.

²⁹Vincent de Paul, outline of a conference to the Ladies of Charity, between 1640 and 1650, in *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, C.M., 14 vols. (Paris: 1920-1926), 13: 798. (Hereinafter cited as CED).

Everywhere, at the end of the troubles of the sixteenth century, facilities had broken down, and the will to rebuild them was lacking.³⁰

The credit for changing this situation lies largely with one man. In typical seventeenth-century fashion, his own revelation of the misery of the poor came first on the spiritual, rather than the material, level. In 1616 Vincent de Paul,³¹ then almoner to the Gondi family, was traveling with Madame de Gondi on her domain when he was asked to hear the confession of a sick peasant. A few days later the peasant declared to Madame de Gondi that this confession had saved his soul, that without it he would most certainly have been damned. Madame de Gondi turned in horror to her almoner: "Ah! Monsieur, what is this? . . . It is doubtless the same for most of these poor people. . . . Ah, Monsieur Vincent, how many souls are being lost! What remedy is there for this?"³²

At his patron's urging, Monsieur Vincent organized a mission in the local parish of Folleville, to exhort the inhabitants to make a general confession. The response was so overwhelming that he could not handle the confessions alone and had to call upon the Jesuits of Amiens for assistance. This was the first of his missions. In 1625, armed with a legacy of sixteen thousand livres from Madame de Gondi, he founded a congregation of priests whose sole purpose was to convert the countryside. The method that they continued to use was the mission: an organized descent by a group of preachers upon a community, a period of intensive exhortation and instruction which ended only when everybody had received the sacrament of penance.

This method, "corresponding to the needs of the country people," as Monsieur Vincent put it, bore great fruit. But its unforeseen product was the effect it had upon the missionaries themselves. "I did not learn about the state of these poor people from someone else," wrote one priest, an Oratorian who had assisted at a mission, "I discovered it for myself. . . . The other confessors and I found aged people, sixty years old and more, who told us freely that they had never confessed; and

³⁰R. P. Chalumeau, "L'assistance aux malades pauvres au xvii^e siècle," *XVII^e Siècle* 90-91 (1971):76.

³¹Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), born of peasant parents in a small village close to Dax, in Landes. Once a swineherd, he lived to become one of the most influential ecclesiastics of his time, when he was appointed to the king's *conseil de conscience*. He was the founder of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Filles de la Charité, as well as the lay confraternities known as the parish *charités*.

³²Louis Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 2 vols. (Paris: Debécourt, Librairie-Editeur, 1843), 1: 28.

when we spoke to them about God, and the most holy Trinity, and the Nativity, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, and other mysteries, it was a language which they did not understand at all."³³

On discovering this alien world so close to its own doorstep, Catholic society experienced a profound sense of shock. Monsieur Vincent and his Mission priests consciously induced and exploited this uncomfortable awareness. Information from the countryside was relayed to the city, and disseminated by word of mouth and by pamphlet.³⁴ This information, acting on the tender *dévo*t conscience, produced powerful results.

In the minds of seventeenth-century theologians, ignorance of the faith meant damnation. "Without a clear faith in the fundamental truths of our holy Church, it is impossible to please God and be saved, no matter what outward ceremonies one observes."³⁵ These neglected people, then, were in danger both of material destitution and spiritual death. And the danger extended back onto those who were guilty of the neglect. "Si non pavisti, occidisti"—if you have not fed them, you have killed them—this hard doctrine was repeated frequently by Vincent de Paul. "How shall we answer to God if through our negligence one of these poor souls comes to die and is lost? . . . Ought we not to be afraid that He will call us to account for this at the hour of our death?"³⁶ It was a disturbing thought, but a powerful one. Beneath the good works of the seventeenth century lay, not a comfortable philanthropy, but a deep sense of anxiety and guilt.

However, this pious laity looked forward also to the temporal reordering of society, and therefore found good works attractive for highly practical reasons. Even Monsieur Vincent was ready to include the socialization of the poor among the blessings of charity: "The rich acquire a million blessings in this world and eternal life in the other . . . the poor are instructed in the fear of God, taught to earn their living, and assisted in their needs, and . . . finally, cities are delivered from throngs of ne'er-do-wells and troublemakers, and improved by the trade created by the industry of the poor."³⁷

³³Ibid., 55.

³⁴Pierre Coste, *Le grand saint du grand siècle: Monsieur Vincent*, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1931), 1: 624-32.

³⁵Boudon, *La Science sacrée du catéchisme*, quoted in Elisabeth Germain, *Langages de la foi à travers l'histoire: mentalités et catéchèse* (Paris: ISPC, 1972), 86.

³⁶Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 1: 237.

³⁷Vincent de Paul, "Règlement d'une charité mixte," *CED*, 13: 510.

The two motivations—the spiritual and the practical—existed side by side, so closely entwined that nobody, then or now, could distinguish one from the other. Under their impulse a great variety of institutions and projects were launched: orphanages, hospitals, refuges, workshops, asylums, prison-visiting programs, legal aid for galley convicts, training schools for servants, seminaries for teachers, furniture depots for the destitute, seed-grain for the peasants—all maintained by voluntary effort until, with the establishment of the *hôpitaux-généraux* (workhouses) at mid-century, the direction began to pass to the government, and the spirit changed.

In short, the manpower behind the good works of the period 1620-1650 was primarily secular, voluntary, deeply religious in conviction, but also dedicated to the concept of an orderly and productive society.

It had one further characteristic: it was largely feminine. Of the different organizations developed to assist the poor, the majority were female. Since the work was all voluntary, this was something over which nobody had any control. Some found the fact worrying, others found it providential.

The beginnings, and growth, of the greatest female charitable organization of the times certainly did have a fortuitous character. In 1617 Vincent de Paul, having escaped temporarily from Madame de Gondi's devoted grasp, was working as a curé in Châtillon-les-Dombes, in the archdiocese of Lyon. One Sunday, just before mass, he learned of a family that was sick, some distance from the village. He announced the news from the pulpit, then, after mass, prepared to go out to visit the family, taking with him "a worthy man, a bourgeois of the town." "On the road we found women going out ahead of us, and, a little further on, others who were coming back. And as it was summer and very hot, these good women were sitting along the side of the roads to rest and get cool. There were so many of them that you could have called them a procession."³⁸

The difficulty was that they had overwhelmed the sick family with their generosity. Monsieur Vincent realized that much of the food they had brought would spoil, and then the family would be in need once more. He decided to coordinate the women's good will: "God gave me this thought: 'could these good women not be brought together and persuaded to offer themselves to God to serve the sick

³⁸Ibid., 14: 125.

poor?' Afterwards, I showed them the way to handle these great necessities with great ease. At once they resolved to do it."³⁹

This was the first parish *Charité*. It was so successful that Vincent de Paul undertook to establish a similar organization wherever he preached a mission, and later instructed his Mission priests to do the same. *Charités* were legally erected as confraternities, with a superior and a treasurer elected by the members. Their funds were raised by donations, by organized begging by the members, and also from any properties that the confraternity might acquire. Many of the village *Charités* owned sheep and cattle.

The most successful *Charités* were those in which women of different social levels were included, because in this case the wealthier women tended to provide the money while the women of modest means did the work.⁴⁰ But the several rules which have survived show that, initially, all members were expected to take their turn preparing the food and visiting the sick. The diet was to include meat, eggs or fish twice a day, as well as wine and bread and—for the very sick—broth and more eggs. The sick poor were expected to confess and communicate, and to accept the spiritual exhortations of their benefactors. Those who died while under the care of the *charité* were to be buried, if necessary, at the *charité's* expense, and the members were to try to attend their funeral, "thus taking the place of mothers who accompany their children to the tomb."⁴¹

As bigger towns became involved, the organization became more elaborate. In Mâcon in 1621, a formal meeting was held at the city hall, attended by municipal and royal officials. The confraternity, once established, was given the responsibility of enumerating the poor and of suggesting how to raise the money to assist them. The city fathers' skepticism dissolved into delight as the project began to take effect. "One no longer found oneself besieged, in church and in the streets, by these sturdy beggars who spend the whole day looking for their living, without respect for the churches, or regard for their betters, or courtesy for those who refuse to give in to their importunities."⁴² The Mâcon operation achieved impressive proportions. Fourteen years

³⁹Ibid., 9: 209.

⁴⁰Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres de Louise de Marillac*, 2 vols. (Paris: privately published, 1890),

12.

⁴¹Règlement de la Charité de Châtillon-les-Dombes (1617), in CED, 13: 423-38.

⁴²Père Desmoulins, Oratorian, quoted in *ibid.*, 495.

later, the *Charité* was still distributing twelve hundred pounds of bread and thirty to thirty-five francs per week, as well as paying for medicines, a doctor, and two nurses to watch over the sick.⁴³

Vincent de Paul did not conceive of this work as exclusively feminine. As early as 1620 he set up a male *Charité*; in 1621, he attempted to make men and women work together. While the women were to continue their work with the sick, the men were to oversee those who were healthy but unable to take care of themselves.⁴⁴ The women's work was more in the charitable tradition, while the men's work contained a corrective element. Monsieur Vincent warned the men to respect the women's work: "Our Lord is as much glorified in the ministry of women as in that of men."⁴⁵ However, the men's *Charités* did not thrive and the mixed *Charités* did not work. He later wrote: "Men and women do not get along together at all in matters of administration; the former want to take it over entirely and the latter will not allow it. . . . We charged the men with the care of the healthy poor and the women with the sick; but because there was a shared purse, we had to get rid of the men. And I can bear this witness in favor of the women, that there is no fault to find in their administration, so careful and accurate are they."⁴⁶

Male membership gradually dwindled and finally collapsed, while female membership continued to grow. The enthusiasm of women for the new confraternities brought them out in numbers that were sometimes alarming. From Beauvais, the royal lieutenant wrote that "about a fortnight ago, a priest named Vincent arrived in this town, and . . . called together a great crowd of women, and persuaded them to set up a branch of the confraternity which he has called a 'Charity.' . . . Since then it has all been arranged by the aforesaid Vincent: this confraternity has been erected and about three hundred women admitted, who meet together frequently to perform their religious exercises and other duties; which ought not to be tolerated."⁴⁷ But official sensibilities aside, the success of the *Charités* was guaranteed, because the need they served was so pressing.

The first confraternity in the archdiocese of Paris was erected in 1629. Vincent de Paul was initially unenthusiastic about the city *Charités*.

⁴³Ibid., 496.

⁴⁴Règlement de la charité mixte de Joigny, in *ibid.*, 447.

⁴⁵Ibid., 455.

⁴⁶Vincent de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, 2 September 1650, *CED*, 4: 71.

⁴⁷Coste, *Le grand saint*, 1: 248.

The institution had been designed specifically for country conditions, for a certain integration of society in which members from different walks of life would still be able to work together at what were, after all, menial tasks. How could the upper-class women of Paris be expected to do the same? His fears proved justified: the high-born ladies were unable to perform the “lowly and demeaning services” that the rule required.⁴⁸ While they were ready to provide and prepare the food, they preferred to send their servants to carry it to the sick. In some cases these servants abused or neglected their charges. The sick poor were “badly served,” remarked Monsieur Vincent.⁴⁹

The solution was suggested, not by Monsieur Vincent, but by someone else. At about this time (1629), while on mission, he met a young servant woman, Marguerite Naseau. She had heard of the *charités* in Paris, and offered herself as a servant to do the work that the ladies could not stomach. He invited her to come, which she did, to serve with great fidelity until her death of the plague in 1633. To Marguerite—the “poor uneducated cowherd” of Villepreux—Vincent would later attribute the creation of the Company of the Filles de la Charité.⁵⁰

Marguerite brought in several other young women, who were given a two-day retreat and then placed in the parish *Charités*. This caused difficulties, however: village girls, no matter how well-intentioned, were poorly prepared for city life. It was decided that they should undergo a period of training in the house of one of the *dames de la Charité*, Mademoiselle Le Gras.⁵¹ Thus the first members and the foundress appeared in reverse order, and thus began the unplanned evolution of the Company of the Filles de la Charité. Even their title was an accident. Originally christened the “servantes des pauvres malades,” or servants of the sick poor, in keeping with their function, they became known to the public as the “filles de la Charité”—the women who worked for the *Charité*. Vincent de Paul later gave the commonplace name its transcendent meaning.

⁴⁸Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 22 January 1645, *CED*, 9: 209.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 244.

⁵⁰Conference of December 1648, *ibid.*, 445-56.

⁵¹Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), niece of the chancellor and leader of the *dévot* party Michel de Marillac; married in 1613 to Antoine Le Gras, *secrétaire des commandements* to Queen Marie de Medicis. While her husband was occupied at court she adopted the lifestyle of a *dévot*, and in particular dedicated herself to visiting the sick. Her husband's death in 1625 left her free to pursue the life she had long desired.

From 1633, when the first few young women entered Mademoiselle Le Gras's house, until 1658, when the company, now numbering eight hundred, received its letters of registration from parlement, the picture is the same: the founders were always led ahead by events, struggling to control and solidify their immensely successful institute. In this long-drawn-out process of foundation, it was Mademoiselle Le Gras who perceived the problems, envisaged the solutions, and begged for decisions. Monsieur Vincent, preoccupied with his other concerns, and also instinctively slow to move, preferred to wait to be sure "that the good God wishes it."⁵²

Another force played a part in the creation of the company: its rich and powerful benefactors. One of Vincent de Paul's greatest successes was the establishment of the Company of Dames de la Charité in Paris in 1634. This organization very soon numbered between two and three hundred members, including some of the *grandes dames* of Parisian society.⁵³ As will be seen, it was always in response to the wishes of important persons such as these that Vincent sent his daughters into a new situation.⁵⁴ The *dévotés* of the upper classes, in other words, pressed the sisters into their own preferred projects, and thus deeply modified the nature of their work.

Initially the community was completely secular in character. The women wore the gray dress and white *toquois*, or turban, that was standard among peasant women of the Paris basin. They rose at a comfortable hour for working women—5:30—and observed no rule of silence. They were allowed to go home on family visits. They took no vows and observed no exceptional religious practices. They were, in Monsieur Vincent's words, "members of parishes, subject to the curés wherever they are established."⁵⁵

Soon, however, the characteristics of a religious community began to appear. In 1634 the women (now twelve in number) received their first "petit règlement."⁵⁶ Their rising time was pushed forward to 4 o'clock. Their daily devotions were defined, the great silence (from evening prayers until morning prayers) was imposed. The obligation of obedience became absolute. In the mother house, Mademoiselle Le

⁵²Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 2: 27.

⁵³Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les dames de la Charité* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1918), 162. Also see René Bady, "Vincent de Paul et les siens," in *Mélanges offerts à André Latreille*, (Lyon: Audin, 1972), 83-7.

⁵⁴Coste, *Le grand saint*, 1: 443.

⁵⁵Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 2: 38.

⁵⁶Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 31 July 1634, CED, 9: 1-13.

Gras was to be superior. In other communities, even those of only two sisters, a superior was to be appointed. "It is necessary," they were told, "that among you there should always be one in the position of superior." Each sister was to attend a retreat annually.⁵⁷ In time, further conventual customs were added. Weekly conferences were to be given, either by Monsieur Vincent or by one of his priests. The rule was to be learned and relearned during the period of "testing"; thereafter it was to be read aloud weekly in community, a regular practice in convents. "Let them resolve to observe with exactitude all the rules, particularly the rule of unquestioning obedience," wrote Mademoiselle Le Gras.⁵⁸ From both her writings and Vincent's, it is plain that the founders privately considered the life of the sisters to be a religious life, as perfect as any found in a monastery. "Your vocation," Monsieur Vincent told them in 1643, "is one of the greatest that I know of in the Church."⁵⁹ This conviction was repeated, with increasing emphasis, throughout the rest of his life. In 1659 he was prepared to say: "You are not religious in name, but you must be religious in fact, and you are more obliged than they to work towards your perfection."⁶⁰

From 1640 onwards, the Filles de la Charité took vows. On the subject of these vows Vincent de Paul was highly circumspect, for fear of altering the legal status of the sisters. Living in community was one thing; living in community with vows was another: it suggested religious life, and religious life, where women were concerned, meant clausura. "To say 'religious' is to say 'cloistered,' and the Filles de la Charité must be free to go everywhere."⁶¹ His solution was to make the vows private, without witnesses. "They are no different from the vows that devout people make in the world," . . . wrote Mademoiselle Le Gras, "indeed they are not like these, since usually people in the world make them in the hearing of their confessor."⁶² By avoiding the slightest semblance of public vows, Vincent de Paul, an expert canonist himself, turned the difficulty of canon law and put his daughters beyond the reach of the cloisterers.

The company still lacked formal status. Mademoiselle Le Gras, who was more concerned with organizational problems than was her

⁵⁷Ibid., 221.

⁵⁸Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 899.

⁵⁹Conference of 7 December 1643, *CED*, 9: 141.

⁶⁰Ibid., 9: 658.

⁶¹Ibid., 9: 143.

⁶²Mademoiselle Le Gras to Abbé de Vaux, 29 June 56. Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 782.

director, kept pressing him on this issue; he kept delaying "until he could see more clearly." In 1645, he found the formula he wanted: the company could be erected as a simple confraternity, like the other *charités* which the sisters had been recruited to serve. This would put its secular character beyond question. To the sisters, who wanted a more exalted title, he later explained: "We have judged it appropriate to leave you with the name of society or confraternity . . . for fear that if the title of congregation was given to you, people would some day start wanting to turn the house into a cloister and themselves into religious, as the Filles de Sainte-Marie have done."⁶⁴

This was the heart of the problem. Vincent de Paul, who had been a friend of François de Sales and Mère de Chantal, and who had been canonical superior of the Visitation on the rue Saint-Antoine since 1622, understood well the trap in which that congregation had been caught.⁶⁵ Once his own daughters began leaving Paris for other dioceses they, too, could find themselves exchanging their life of service for confinement in a cloister.

He gave them instructions on how to speak to a strange bishop: "If he asks you who you are, and if you are religious, tell him no, by the grace of God; that it is not that you do not have high esteem for religious, but that if you were like them you would have to be enclosed, and that as a result you would have to say good-bye to the service of the poor. Tell him that you are poor Daughters of Charity, and that you are given to God for the service of the poor, and that you are free to retire or to be sent away."⁶⁶

In this last sentence lay the bargaining strength of the company. From early days the sisters had proved their usefulness. The letters of Mademoiselle Le Gras show that the demand for their services far exceeded the supply of sisters. "You are only there on loan," she reminded them.⁶⁷ By retaining their freedom to leave a situation that had become unsuitable, they were able to avoid interference in their way of life. The final difficulty for the company was the matter of jurisdiction. Since the time of Borromeo, all new female communities had been subject to the bishop in whose diocese they were established.

⁶³Robert Lemoine, *Le monde des religieux: l'époque moderne 1563-1789*, vol. 15 (part 2) of *Histoire du Droit et des Institutions de l'Eglise en Occident*, ed. Gabriel Le Bras and Jean Gaudemet (Paris: Editions Cujas, 1976), 309.

⁶⁴Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 8 October 1655, *CED*, 9: 102.

⁶⁵For a discussion of the case of the Visitation, see chapter 2.

⁶⁶Advice to the sisters leaving for Nantes, conference of 22 October 1650, *CED*, 9: 533-34.

⁶⁷Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 396.

As the previous chapter has shown, this rule was a deterrent to any project of a central direction, or of unity between houses. "The more houses we have," Fourier had written, "and the more dioceses they are in, the more difficulty we shall have in establishing an assured government and a perfect union of all houses."⁶⁸ His solution had been to appoint a visitor to oversee observance of the rule throughout the congregation, while still deferring to the local bishops' authority. His plan had had only small success; the majority of houses of the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame* had passed into the jurisdiction of the ordinaries. The other new active congregations had remained altogether under diocesan control, and the result, once the first generation of nuns disappeared, had been fragmentation.

At the time of its erection as a confraternity in 1645, the new company of *servantes des pauvres malades* had been placed by the archbishop under the customary obedience: "the confraternity is and will remain forever under the authority and dependence of Monseigneur the archbishop and of his successors."⁶⁹ It followed from this that, if the company moved into other dioceses, the communities involved would be subject to other ordinaries. Furthermore, its close ties with the Congregation of the Mission were to last only for Monsieur Vincent's lifetime. It appears that the founder himself was ready to accept this arrangement; but Mademoiselle Le Gras was made of sterner stuff. At her request the queen mother petitioned the pope, asking that the confraternity be placed under the perpetual direction of the superior general of the Mission.⁷⁰ When Rome granted her wish in 1655, this simple confraternity obtained what no feminine religious congregation had hitherto achieved in France: unity of direction and a partial exemption from local episcopal control.⁷¹

The path that the Filles de la Charité took was difficult. Interiorly, their lives resembled those of religious in all but the strictly monastic aspects of *clausura* and Divine Office. Vincent de Paul, called upon to explain how they differed from religious, could only say that "most religious are directed only towards their own perfection, whereas

⁶⁸L. Carrez, *Histoire du premier monastère de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame établi à Châlons-sur-Marne* (Châlons-sur-Marne: 1906), 255.

⁶⁹Erection of the Company of the Daughters of Charity into a Confraternity, 20 November 1646), *CED*, 13: 558.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 13: 567.

⁷¹After Mademoiselle Le Gras's death, and just before his own, Monsieur Vincent was forced to make one final organizational decision. He chose for her replacement, not one of the Dames de la Charité, but a sister from inside the confraternity. For a canonist's perspective on the institution of this company, see Lemoine, *Le monde des religieux*, 309-13.

these women are devoted . . . to the care of their neighbor.⁷² Exteriorly, however, they were simply "women who come and go like seculars." All external signs that might identify them as religious were carefully avoided. Thus they were forbidden to wear veils, or to ring bells in their houses, or erect grilles in their parlors. "It is to be feared . . . especially if there is a grille, that in due course it will turn into a religious order," Monsieur Vincent explained.⁷³ Their language was revealing in its saintly deviousness. While privately they used the vocabulary of religious (the conferences used words like "company," "rule," and "habit"), outwardly they spoke as seculars, and the words invariably used were "confraternity," "*règlement*," and "dress." Like François de Sales before him, but for different reasons, Monsieur Vincent impressed upon his daughters the principle of interiority. "Your monastery," he told them, in what may well be called the founding charter of the *filles Séculières*, "is the house of the sick . . . your cell is your rented room . . . For cloister, the city streets, where you must go in the service of your patients. For clausura, obedience, because obedience must be your enclosure, never exceeding what is set down for you, holding you enclosed within its bounds. For your grille, the fear of God. For your veil, holy modesty."⁷⁴

Whereas the founder of the Visitation had desired to use the exercise of charity to perfect the inner life, Vincent de Paul gave priority to the life of service. His daughters were "to leave God for the sake of God."⁷⁵ In divesting them of all the external appearances of religious life, he was simply practicing a defensive strategy. In the minds of their contemporaries, the slightest suggestion that religious women were free to roam the streets was the subject of scandal. Hence the care to maintain a secular appearance; hence the repeated admonitions to go out only when permitted and to behave modestly while outdoors.⁷⁶ In spite of all this, scandals did occur, and the sisters were sometimes harassed in the streets; but in general, they were well received by the public.

Just as the company's community life evolved, so did its work. Originally, the women were exactly what their title suggested, "servantes des pauvres malades." They made two rounds each day

⁷²Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 2: 38-9.

⁷³Council of 28 June 1646, *CED*, 13: 602.

⁷⁴Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 24 August 1659, *ibid.*, 10: 662.

⁷⁵Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 17 November 1658, *ibid.*, 10: 595.

⁷⁶Rules of the Daughters of Charity, *ibid.*, 13: 555.

with the medicines prescribed by the doctors, and a third round—at noon—with the pot of food, or *marmite*, that had been prepared by the ladies of the local *charité*. Soon their duties were extended to include bandaging, bleeding, and the making of medicines.⁷⁷ Along with this physical care, they were to give simple spiritual counseling: an exhortation to receive the sacraments and to accept the malady in a spirit of faith.⁷⁸

Another specialization appeared: teaching. Although their principal duty was to visit the sick poor, the sisters, from earliest times, also taught catechism to little girls.⁷⁹ There were two reasons for this. The parish *charités* had always concerned themselves with catechizing,⁸⁰ and, by extension, with school classes. In the words of one historian, “they put schooling in the same category as soup for the sick, or clothes for babies, or hospital visiting.”⁸¹ The sisters inherited this work, along with the other undertakings of the *charités*. The ultimate purpose in this, as in every other good work, was salvific. “Take pleasure,” Mademoiselle Le Gras wrote, “in instructing, to the best of your ability, these little creatures who have been bought with the blood of the Son of God, so that they may praise Him and glorify Him eternally.”⁸²

There was a second, more practical, reason for teaching school. The intended milieu for the sisters was the small town or village, where a *charité* of approximately twenty women supervised the care of the sick poor. For an operation of this size, a single servant was adequate. But the lifestyle of the sisters depended on a community of at least two. Therefore the second sister needed another occupation, and the instruction of children provided it. In her spare time she could assist in visiting the sick,⁸³ or do handwork (usually spinning) to help support the house. The *Fille de la Charité*, like other poor women, seldom sat without a distaff in her hand.⁸⁴

⁷⁷Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 589.

⁷⁸Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 16 March 1642, *CED*, 9: 60-66.

⁷⁹Coste, *Le grand saint*, 1: 464.

⁸⁰See, for instance, the *règlement* for the *charité* of Folleville, 1620, *CED*, 13: 484.

⁸¹Marcel Fosseyeux, *Les écoles de charité à Paris sous l'ancien régime et dans la première partie du XIX^e siècle* (Paris: 1912), 27.

⁸²Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 614.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 853.

⁸⁴Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 14 October 1641, *CED*, 9: 51. Any surplus cash was sent home to the mother house at the end of the year.

Out of this division of labor a tendency towards further specialization developed. Those women who could read and write became schoolmistresses, while others, whose work was in nursing or visiting, remained illiterate. In time, the work of the schools absorbed more of the sisters. However, although they occasionally sought advice on teaching methods from teaching professionals such as the Ursulines or the Filles de la Croix, they did not at this time become specialists in teaching. Mademoiselle Le Gras retained her reserve in the question of the schooling of poor children. "The fear and love of God": these were the subjects to be taught, not the facility "to talk a lot about it."⁸⁵

Another more fundamental development began, which the founders had not foreseen and did not entirely welcome. This was the diversion of the sisters into institutions. The hospital at Angers was the first: badly administered and inadequately staffed, it requested Filles de la Charité to take over the nursing. Monsieur Vincent's friend Madame Goussault pleaded with him from her deathbed to grant the request. He acquiesced reluctantly, and in 1640 nine sisters were officially installed as hospital nurses.⁸⁶ From this time on, more and more of the company's personnel were placed in the service of institutions. In Paris, by 1660, the year of both founders' deaths, the sisters were in charge of three major institutions (the Enfants Trouvés, the Nom-de-Jésus, a workhouse for the aged poor, and the Petites Maisons, an insane asylum), and heavily involved in two more, the Hôtel-Dieu and the prison for galley-convicts.⁸⁷ As well, they had been committed to more than a score of institutions in the provinces—hospitals both civil and military, orphanages, and asylums.

Their success in these institutions was an irresistible argument for continuing the work. "You would not believe how greatly God blesses these good women everywhere, and in how many places they are wanted," Monsieur Vincent told his priests. "One bishop wants for them for three hospitals, another for two; a third wants them as well; he talked to me about it only three days ago, and pressed me to send them to him."⁸⁸

⁸⁵Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 854.

⁸⁶Coste, *Le grand saint*, 1: 465-71.

⁸⁷It was still the practice to sentence criminals to forced service as oarsmen on the state's galleys. Before being shipped out to serve their sentence they might spend some time in prison. Vincent de Paul had always felt a personal concern for these galley-convicts, since he himself in his youth had been a slave of the Turks.

⁸⁸Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 2: 36.

Nevertheless, the work of the hospitals was a deviation from the company's original purpose. "Well, there you are doing the work of real hospital nurses," wrote Mademoiselle Le Gras to some of the sisters, "just so long as that does not interrupt the work of the Company of Charity."⁸⁹ As she and Vincent de Paul saw it, home care had been developed expressly to save poor families from the pain and separation caused by hospitalization, "if in a poor family someone fell sick [and] it was necessary to separate husband from wife, mother from children, father from family."⁹⁰ The growing movement to build and expand hospitals contradicted the work of the parish *charités*, and in so far as it drew from the same pockets it threatened to weaken them. "What will become of the work of the Dames de la Charité," wrote Mademoiselle Le Gras, "if their patients are forced to go to the hospital? You will see: the worthy poor will be deprived of the help that they receive from prepared food and remedies, and the little bit of money that they get now will no longer be available for their needs."⁹¹

However, the company could do little to resist the new trend. The *servantes des pauvres malades* were, from their inception, bound to the *dames de la charité* and to the social levels from which the ladies came. Vincent de Paul reminded them continually of their dependence on these ladies: "It is they who give you the means to serve God and the poor. What would you do without them, my daughters?"⁹² This close association with the ladies, and especially with the most aristocratic confraternity of all, the Dames de la Charité of the Hôtel Dieu of Paris, was the source of the company's strength, of its ability to expand almost without regard to expense. But it also meant that the paths along which the company was to move were largely chosen by the ladies, often with regard to their own territorial concerns.

Thus the move to Angers was inspired by Madame Goussault, that to Richelieu by the duchesse d'Aiguillon, that to Vaux by Madame Fouquet, and so on.⁹³ The patronage of two queens, Marie-Louise Gonzague and Anne of Austria, took the sisters to Poland and to a string of military hospitals along the frontiers of France. The ladies had power to dictate not only the sisters' location, but the nature of

⁸⁹Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 808.

⁹⁰Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 13 February 1646, *CED*, 9: 246.

⁹¹Mademoiselle Le Gras, *Lettres*, 805.

⁹²Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 14 June 1643, *CED*, 9: 118.

⁹³Coste, *Le grand saint*, 1: chapter 19, 461-528 throughout.

their work. "They are like the head of a body, and you are only the feet," Monsieur Vincent told the sisters. "You must treat the ladies this way; otherwise, they will get tired of you."⁹⁴

Thus the free-moving and flexible parish *charités* were largely overtaken by the prevailing trend towards institutionalization. In one outstanding case, however, Vincent de Paul refused to give way. This was in the matter of the Hôpital-Général of Paris, the great social experiment of the 1650s.

Renfermement, "the involuntary incarceration of groups considered marginal or potentially dangerous,"⁹⁵ had been in the public mind for some time. A move in 1611 to lock up the beggars of Paris had had the effect of clearing the streets, as those beggars mostly preferred to leave town. As the official effort flagged, however, they came flooding back in. A permanent solution would require a more coordinated effort, like that which established the Hôpital-Général in Lyon in 1622.

The principal promoter of the project of a Hôpital-Général for Paris was the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement. As early as 1631 the subject was under discussion at its meetings.⁹⁶ But it was the years after the Fronde—"the high point of popular suffering"—which saw forty thousand beggars in the streets of Paris,⁹⁷ that brought the matter to a head. In 1656 mendicity was banned by royal edict. Out-of-town beggars were expelled. The beggars of Paris were ordered enclosed in one or other of a group of institutions. In 1657 the round-up began, assisted by bodies of enforcers especially enlisted for the purpose, and by a decree from the parlement forbidding the private distribution of alms. In the first year alone six thousand poor were incarcerated.⁹⁸

Renfermement had its apologists. It saved the poor from idleness, considered in the seventeenth century to be the mother of all vices, and it taught them a trade. As the Jansenist Arnauld explained, it had a pedagogical value. "The greatest benefit of incarcerating the poor is the good education of the children. This is best achieved by watching over them ceaselessly, and, by this continual surveillance "cutting

⁹⁴Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 2 February [1647], *CED*, 9: 306-07.

⁹⁵E. Chill, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth-Century France," *International Review of Social History* 7, no. 3 (1962):403.

⁹⁶Allier, *La "Cabale des dévots"*, 63.

⁹⁷Chill, "Religion and Mendicity," 413

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 415.

them off from evildoing."⁹⁹ Above all, it fitted in with the mercantilist spirit which now, at mid-century, was coming into its own. One of the greatest champions of the workhouses was Minister Colbert, for reasons different from those of Arnauld, as his instructions to the municipality of Auxerre show. "Inasmuch as abundance always comes from hard work, and misery from idleness, your first effort must be to find the means of enclosing the poor and of giving them an occupation to earn their living. On this matter you are to make good resolutions as soon as possible."¹⁰⁰

It did not, however, impress Vincent de Paul. He was a member of the *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement*. Like other men of his time, as the *règlements* of the *charités* show, he saw no harm in mixing assistance with discipline. He himself had established a workhouse—the *Nom-de-Jésus*—which combined a hard working day with lengthy religious devotions. However, he objected in principle to coercion. *Nom-de-Jésus* had only voluntary inmates, and its success was attested to by the fact that it had a waiting list.¹⁰¹ Why not start the *Hôpital-Général*, also, on a voluntary basis? His plan was later described by his first biographer: "According to his thinking all that was needed at first was a trial: a hundred or two hundred poor should be taken in—and again, only those who would come of their free will, without any constraint. If these were well treated and happy, they would attract others, and thus the number would grow as Providence sent the funds . . . and that on the contrary, the haste and fear that was being used might well be an impediment to God's design."¹⁰²

When his point of view did not prevail, and the *Hôpital-Général* became an institution of confinement, he distanced himself from the project. On learning that the government had assigned the spiritual direction of the institution to his Mission priests, he declined the offer, "not being sure enough that God wills it."¹⁰³ Asked to send sisters to the women's institution at the *Salpêtrière*, he sent two, but only for a short time.¹⁰⁴

It has been argued here that two approaches to the question of public assistance existed side by side in seventeenth-century France.

⁹⁹A. Arnauld to P. de Cort, 6 April 1657, quoted in Taveneaux, *Le catholicisme dans la France classique*, 1: 220.

¹⁰⁰Quoted in Gutton, *La société et les pauvres*, 134.

¹⁰¹Coste, *Le grand saint*, 2: 495.

¹⁰²Abelly, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, 1: 194.

¹⁰³Quoted in *ibid.*, 144.

¹⁰⁴Coste, *Le grand saint*, 2: 506.

The one, which found its most unequivocal implementation in the policies of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement and in the building of the *hôpitaux-généraux*, treated poverty as a punishment and a danger "Social disorder was man's concupiscence writ large."¹⁰⁵ The other, represented by Vincent de Paul and the parish *charités*, was more compassionate. "The poor are our masters," Monsieur Vincent told his daughters. "They are our kings, and they must be obeyed. It is not an exaggeration to speak of them like this, since Our Lord is in the poor."¹⁰⁶

It is not too simplistic to say that the first, and more modern, approach pertained to men, and the second, more traditionalist, approach, to women. "If the work to be done is considered political," wrote Mademoiselle Le Gras, "it seems that men must undertake it; if it is considered a work of charity, then women may undertake it."¹⁰⁷ The exercise of charity sprang naturally from women's position in the family and in society.¹⁰⁸ The nature of the work of the Dames de la Charité and, by extension, of the Filles de la Charité, was traditional. After all, it was the women of Châtillon-les-Dombes, not the men, whom Vincent de Paul had met on the road after he had made his appeal for help. This kind of action was perfectly familiar and unthreatening to the seventeenth-century world.

But the scale of the effort changed, and with it, the effect that the women had on their social environment. By 1660 charity was becoming an important part of the Church's business. In subsequent years, as Louis XIV's reign progressed and the secular powers became more concerned with the management of society, this highly practical aspect of the Church's work fell more and more under government control. In so far as women made themselves indispensable to this work, they established a new role for themselves, not only in the Church, but in lay society.¹⁰⁹ However, the intervention of the government in the management of the poor paralleled, if it did not actually contribute to, the exhaustion of the spiritual movement that had given birth to the *charités*.¹¹⁰ At the moment that society acquired an appetite

¹⁰⁵Chill, "Religion and Mendicity," 424.

¹⁰⁶Vincent de Paul, *Correspondance*, 13: 430. [This appears to be an erroneous citation for the Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 25 November 1658, *CED*, 13: 610].

¹⁰⁷Pensées de Louise de Marillac, quoted in Coste, *Le grand saint*, 2: 497.

¹⁰⁸Gustave Fagniez, *La femme et la société française dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: J. Gambler, 1929), 362.

¹⁰⁹Gutton, *La société et les pauvres*, 149.

¹¹⁰Deyon, "À propos du paupérisme," 152.

for schools, hospitals, and orphanages, the voluntary support systems established by the laity began to fall away. The *filles séculières* found themselves alone in the field, stripped of the cover that the *dévot* environment had once provided them, much closer now to a professional lifestyle than they had been at the beginning.

In 1633, a handful of village girls, armed only with their own good intentions, had worked under the direction of parish *charités* at tasks too menial for their patrons to perform. In 1660 an officially recognized company of some eight hundred women, with strong central direction and an equally strong *esprit de corps*, was spread out across the country. The women obeyed a rule, took simple vows, and wore a distinctive dress, yet remained secular. However, they were indeed religious, as their founder told them, in all but name. This was a revolution, though a hidden one. The Council of Trent had forbidden religious women to mix with the world. The first Frenchwomen who had attempted to lead a life combining religion with service to society—the Ursulines, the Visitandines, and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame—had been firmly put back into the cloister. Yet here were other women, only a few years later, and less than a half-century after the legislation of Trent had been accepted by the French Church, doing exactly what the council had forbidden. The principal reason for their success was one of approach. The *congrégées* of the Counter-Reformation had attempted a modification of the religious life, and this was seen as threatening, both by the reforming hierarchy and by Catholic society at large. The *filles Séculières* approached their goal from a different direction. They denied all connection with the religious life. They practiced a modification of the secular life, adapting it to be more devout, more ordered. There was nothing unusual in this. As a respected Parisian ecclesiastic observed, "It seems that this generation wishes to live by a Rule, and that by following the example [of religious], people of the world propose to live as though they have fled the world, though this flight is only one of the spirit."¹¹ From the private *dévot* life to community life was a small step, and for single women an eminently sensible one. If purists stirred nervously, the rest of the world refused to be alarmed. Who could find fault, as long as they remained secular? No one was unduly concerned, any longer,

¹¹¹"Sentiment de M. Loisel Docteur de la Maison et Société de Sorbonne, Chancelier de l'Eglise et Université de Paris, Curé de St-Jean," in the preface to the *Reglement et pratique chrestiens, en forme de constitutions des Filles et vefves Seculières, du Seminaire nommé de l'Union Chrestienne, établies dans plusieurs Dioceses* (1673).

with the wider canonical implications. Finally, when the new communities sent their members out to serve the poor, society remained equitable. After all, the women were performing a useful service at moderate cost, and this was a conclusive argument in their favor. Then, within a very few years more, the *filles Séculières* were part of the structure of public assistance, and from that time on their position was secure.

People as a rule are glad to talk to a king; those who think it hard to talk to God for half an hour have no judgment.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul,
conference to the Daughters of Charity, 4 June 1643)*

It is essential to continue well, because to begin is nothing.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul,
conference to the Daughters of Charity, 16 August 1640)*

Apostolic Reflection

BY

HUGH O'DONNELL, C.M.*

The Inter-Assembly document of the Daughters of Charity, *At Jacob's Well*, states: "We will move forward . . . We will commit ourselves to the way of discernment through apostolic reflection." These words declare apostolic reflection will be your way of life, your way of journeying forward.¹

Two insights emerged in working with the Ongoing Formation Team which give direction and substance to the following article. The first appeared in the presentation on Vincentian Discernment, namely, that *unrestricted readiness* is at the heart of discernment and belongs, not to the order of technique or spiritual means but is our way of life. At the center of our lives is *unrestricted readiness* rooted in the goodness of God which opens us dynamically toward the Kingdom of God and our brothers and sisters.

The second insight concerns apostolic reflection as a concrete instance of discernment. Apostolic reflection is not a religious exercise or a new technique that is now in fashion. Rather, apostolic reflection is emerging in our time as the very center of community life in such a way that it is the way forward. *Sharing our lives is the way forward*. This insight is at the heart of these reflections.

What is the foundation of apostolic reflection for Vincent? It is the absolute conviction "God is here!" I have been mentored on the road to this understanding by a confrere, Father André Dodin, and a Trinitarian priest, Father Dennis Dwyer. They led me to understand the profound influence of Benet of Canfield, the English Capuchin, on

*This is a companion article to "Vincentian Discernment," which appeared in *Vincentian Heritage* 15, no. 1 (1994):7-23.

¹The Congregation of the Mission also affirms apostolic sharing as a key way of renewing and animating its own missionary life, though the vocabulary is different. Paragraph 46 of the *Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission* reads, "In community prayer we find an excellent way of animating and renewing our lives, especially when we celebrate the word of God and share it, or when in fraternal dialogue we share with one another the fruit of our spiritual and apostolic experience."

Vincent and the more distant but real influence of Jan Ruusbroec, the Flemish mystic. The very important lesson Vincent learned from them is "God is here" -- within me, in front of me, behind me, in this person, this sister, this child, these circumstances, these events. Much careful study remains to be done. I will present what I know and trust you to receive it to the degree it resonates with the love in your hearts and your lived experience of Vincent and Louise.

I heard of Benet of Canfield for the first time four years ago. I learned from Father Dodin that in 1609, when Vincent arrived in Paris for the first time, Father Duval gave him a copy of Canfield's principal work, *The Rule of Perfection*. Canfield is considered by historians of the spiritual life as the Master of the Masters of seventeenth-century spirituality. In particular, he was a teacher of Cardinal de Bérulle and many of those interested in the spiritual renewal of France. When Vincent came to Paris in 1609, he had not yet let go of his ambitions. When Canfield's book came into his hands, he was just beginning to turn to a totally new future in the kingdom. Fifty years later, in 1658, when he wrote the *Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission*, he took the paragraph on discerning God's will and obedience to it body and bones from Canfield. But, Canfield's influence on Vincent penetrated his spirit far beyond this text. When I had an opportunity to read *The Rule of Perfection*, I experienced knowing Vincent in a wholly new way. Comparable to reading Francis de Sales's *An Introduction to the Devout Life* and *On the Love of God*, I realized I was reading Benet of Canfield just as Vincent himself had.

Canfield maintained that the whole of the spiritual journey could be boiled down to one thing: the will of God. God's will mediates everything else. Canfield's influence on Vincent is found, for example, in Vincent's words, "Do not tread on the heels of Providence." He took these words from Canfield and they characterize Vincent's whole spiritual journey.

Canfield divides *The Rule of Perfection* according to the three ways God's will comes to us, namely, the external will of God, the internal will of God and the supereminent will of God. The external will of God which is well known to us, refers to what we are permitted or forbidden to do. These commands and prohibitions flow from the moral law, civil society, the Church or one's situation in life. The external will of God--that is easy enough. Sometimes we stop there.

But Canfield says there is also an internal will. It resembles Jesuit discernment, which pays attention to the inner motions of the spirit,

our feelings, our emotions, our interior experience. It refers to the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit. The will of God is manifested to us in the ways we are attracted and repelled interiorly. We are invited by Saint Ignatius to listen to our interior, our feelings, our emotions, our likes and dislikes, our consolations and desolations. There is an increasing interiority and intimacy between the human heart and the Spirit.

The third and most interior level is the supereminent will of God. The expression sounds very technical, but it can be translated this way. It is the knowledge of the will of God that comes about through friendship, through communion, through having one heart with God. It is the knowledge of God arising intuitively from the love of God. The gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit operate in the same way: spontaneously. We become 'in tune' and then we become intuitive in regard to God's will. When a couple has been married for fifty years, each one knows what is in the other's mind and heart. When we have had friends for a long time, we know in the same way, and beyond that we know we know. That's what the expression "the supereminent will of God" means. It is the knowledge of God's will which comes about through love, communion, friendship, being of one mind and heart with God. That is what Saint Paul speaks of in First Corinthians, when he speaks of having the mind and heart of Christ. It is this increasingly interior experience of God's will that leads us to the heart of Vincent's life.

There is one more influence worth noting. Who influenced Benet of Canfield? Canfield probably was very much influenced by the Flemish mystic Jan Ruusbroec, who is considered by some as the greatest of all the mystics. At the same time, he is *the least other-worldly* of all the mystics. This is Evelyn Underhill's considered opinion. If we translate *least other-worldly* into positive terms, you will see what I am leading to: Ruusbroec regards the mystic as the one who knows in his gut, in her heart, in his bones, in her being that *God is here*. That is his great contribution. He sees that we are not outside of God. We exist *within the common life* of God. When God speaks the Eternal Word, at the very same moment (if you can talk that way) God speaks us. As the Spirit brings everything back to God eternally, the Spirit is always bringing us back to God. For Ruusbroec, we are drawn into the breathing of God: the speaking of the Word and the return of the Spirit. We are inside the divine breathing out and breathing in. God is here. God is *here*. We are *in* God. We are *in* God.

I think this is the deepest sense of Vincent's and Louise's life. If we try to get to their heart and soul, what would we say? We would say that in their hearts and in their bones, they know "God is here!"

I began to reach the conclusion that Vincent's separation from Cardinal de Bérulle was not something he chose to do, rather it was something he had to do. He received a lot from Bérulle, who was an important guide and companion for a long time. It was Bérulle who got him to Clichy and to Châtillon. Vincent, though he could have joined the Oratory, did not; he was being led in another direction. I believe there was a deep reason why Vincent found himself on another path than Bérulle's. For Bérulle, God was elsewhere. He regarded life in terms of taking what was happening in front of him and bringing it to the Divine Liturgy before the throne of God. Vincent's experience led him in the opposite direction. For Vincent, God is here and the Divine Liturgy is in front of us. God is here! That is why we can say "the poor are our Masters." God is here! God is here in poor people, in our experiences, in events and in the persons who are in our presence and in whose presence we are. Saint Ignatius is very strong on the secularity of God's presence, but Vincent recognizes God's presence in a particular form--the presence of God in poor people.

Let us think of *repetition of prayer*, which is a creation of Vincent and Louise, from this perspective. Spontaneously and from his heart, Vincent says: Sister, what do you think? Please share your prayer with us, for 'God is here,' God is in your life, in your heart, in your thoughts, in your reflections, in your prayer, in your experiences. Share God with us.

The heart and soul of apostolic reflection, then, is to be found in the radical conviction that *God is here*. When you come together in apostolic reflection, then, what is the ground for your coming together? God is here in me, in my Sister, in each other and in the community. God is here in our coming together.

Now what is the contribution of Vincent and Louise? They treated each person as sacred and unique. Personalism is very powerful with them. Vincent and Louise treated one another as sacred and unique. Then they treated each and every person as sacred and unique.

DePaul University in Chicago has been able to identify the charism of the university in a way people can work with, which is what you have done with your mission statements. You have identified the five qualities that characterize your institutions. DePaul found two words to express our values: *Vincentian Personalism*.

The person is very much at the center for Vincent and Louise. So, you can see that the key in apostolic reflection is the sacredness of every person in the group, then, the sacredness of the coming together of different people on this given evening. Another thing that is very strong in Louise and in Vincent is the idea that every person is a member of the Body of Christ, and, consequently, is a gift. There is deep affection for each sister. It is each person as person and each person as member in communion with the others that evokes not only respect but affection and deep attention to each one's silence, presence, being and words.

I think one of the great miracles in the life of Louise is that she became such a great mother to the Daughters of Charity. Louise's basic wound is on her mother's side. She had very good relationships with the men in her life: she had an affectionate and trusting relationship with her father who claimed her in spite of illegitimacy, with her husband, with Francis de Sales, and with Vincent. On her father's side, there was great natural strength. Her wound was on the mother's side. She tried to overcome that in the way she raised Michel but without notable success. She tried so hard to be a good mother to Michel that she was chronically anxious about him. The miracle of grace, to my way of thinking, is that she became such a tremendous mother to the Daughters of Charity. She knew each one personally and held each one in her heart with affection and tender love. She passed on bits of information from one to the other in her letters, and taught them everything from the alphabet to all that the mission required. This is a remarkable story of transformation. It says something to us about our own wounds and what the grace of God does. In exactly the place where she was wounded initially, she became an absolutely wonderful mother to her Daughters and to many others. Vincent and Louise shared their apostolic and spiritual experiences with one another over a period of thirty-five years.

In our reflection on apostolic reflection, there are three beacons that guide us: (1) the sacredness and uniqueness of each person; (2) the affection for each member of the local community and of the larger community; and (3) the sharing of apostolic and spiritual experiences with one another.

In 1989, I gave a retreat in England to Daughters of Charity. I met a Daughter who was being missioned to Liverpool. Liverpool, famous as one of the nineteenth century industrial cities, is in severe decline. In the center of that city is a place called Netherly. It is inner city. The

three Daughters on mission there have a ministry of presence. Their mission is to be parishioners in that place. The Sister I met was in her early fifties when a letter went around asking for volunteers for Ethiopia. Somewhere in the back of her mind, she had the vague idea that someday she would go. She volunteered, thinking there was no chance she would be chosen. The next thing she knew she was in Ethiopia. She was there for ten or eleven years and loved it. For reasons of health she came back, expecting to return to Ethiopia, where her heart was. It did not happen. Instead, she was being missioned to Liverpool. You can see from what is written below, she has found a new life and mission. I got the letter around Christmas, just before we met to plan this day. In it she talked about how important, how central apostolic reflection was to them in their radical and in a certain way difficult mission. I asked her permission to quote from the letter. She responded that all three sisters gave their permission but could not imagine that what was said could be important to the American sisters. She was glad for whatever gift it might be. Actually, it is a great gift. She writes:

I must admit, God is so good to me . . . just wondering if I am still on the right track—and being careful not to get our little community into a rut . . . This would defeat the purpose of this difficult mission—"parishioners" in a very poor parish in a first world country, where we are struggling together to maintain a very simple lifestyle—on the beat on the streets of the estate—trusting on Divine Providence to see to our needs—and together trying to live within a budget, that is realistic but not excessive, spending only what we need and not satisfying every fad or fancy. We are helping each other to grow and in this growth process to remain full of joy—hope and love. To help us do this we have apostolic sharing on Wednesdays—where we come into His Presence and share with Him and with each other all the joy—sorrows—disappointments and visions for the future. He does speak to each of us if we listen. We love that hour sharing. Even if we have no words to say—it is still great. I remember you saying how difficult—if not impossible—for (some) to pray thus. They do not know what is missing in their

lives. I hope—no pressure of work—not any thing will take over this hour—it is here we get food for the week ahead.

This is a remarkable testimony to what apostolic reflection can become. Apostolic reflection has come to be at the very center of their lives. It is their way forward. The gift of God is communicated through the companions with whom they live and with whom they share their lives. Sharing has become the central gift. It flows from life, from the exigency of the apostolate, from a felt need for one another -- from life together.

What forms can apostolic reflection take? There are many. As an introduction to answering this question, what I want to say is that there is a difference sense of corporateness among us. Today, very often, people in the same house no longer share the same ministry. In the past, very often, everyone in the same house, whether it was a school or hospital or social agency, had the same ministry. Where the ministry was shared, there was a natural inclination to talk about it over supper. The reality has changed to a large extent. If we are to be corporate at the level of mission and apostolate, we need to talk to each other about what is happening in our *diverse* apostolates and share our *different* experiences. What happened automatically in another age has to happen consciously and dialogically today. There is a new sense of corporateness, a new opportunity for corporateness in apostolic communities today. Consequently community is not simply given but has to be created. This is also true of the Church. How is the Church created? The Church is created through the Eucharist, through the sharing of the Body and Blood, the dying and rising of Jesus. The Eucharist *celebrated* and *shared* creates the Church.

The same thing is true of our communities. Our communities are no longer a given. If they are only a given, then our houses will be merely hotels. They have to be created in a way they did not need to be created before. The vehicle for creating our communities is sharing: free, deliberate, conscious willingness to share our lives, our experiences, our spirituality, our relationship with God, with one another. There is a new and important face to corporateness, something that could have been taken for granted in the past. In a hospital, you used to take for granted that employees would absorb the values of the Daughters of Charity from daily contact. That is not true in the same way today. Now you have Vice-Presidents for Mission Effectiveness.

Today the values need to be shared consciously, deliberately, intentionally, freely. You have found a way to instill the love, the knowledge and the commitment of your coworkers and employees to the charism.

Apostolic reflection, which may previously have been an exercise on the periphery of your lives, has now become your *way of life*. It has come to the center. It is *the way* in which you and we will create our communities.

I would like to suggest a useful image from John Dunne, who has written *The House of Wisdom*. The basic image he uses in his lifetime of theological reflection and writing is the image of *passing over and passing back*. He says our way of moving forward is first to honor our own experience and then to pass over from our own experience to our neighbor's experience. Touched and changed by his or her experience, we pass back to our own experience. It is a way of going beyond the presumption that my experience is normative, the only experience that counts, or the voice of inferiority which discounts my experience in favor of yours. It is a dialogical model, valuing both your experience and mine. *Passing over and passing back . . .* and being transformed in the process. That is the rhythm of our lives. You can see a little of Ruusbroec in this--the divine action of breathing--going forth and coming back.

If we live in this world by passing over and passing back, then diversity is a blessing and the differences of our sisters and of our brothers are a great gift. We pass over into the lives of people who have different points of view, who do not necessarily agree with us, who have their own experiences. The Spirit blesses us through the richness of our differences--in dialogue.

To return to the question: what form will apostolic reflection take? There are several, none is normative. The first one, the one which we are most familiar with, is the *common sharing concerning a common experience*.

The second one, which is the one we are going to experience this afternoon, is *personal sharing-corporate listening*. A group called Inter-Community Consultants, headquartered in Saint Louis, helped our province a great deal in organization and community process. The central process they used was called *simple sharing-corporate listening*. It goes like this. In a group, each person is entitled and invited to share his or her story, his or her experience. Simple sharing means all we do is share it, without dialogue or comments, without critique. We wel-

come each person's story as it is experienced and shared. It is a non-judgmental, non-critical, non-evaluative way of letting people speak out of their own lives. It is permitted to ask a question for clarification. Consequently, everyone around the circle gets a chance to share her (or his) experience. This is followed by *corporate listening*. It is a little tricky but not very. "What did we hear ourselves say?" "What did we, as a group, hear ourselves say?" It could be as simple as, we heard ourselves say it has been a difficult week, or we have heard ourselves say that our God is a God of surprises, or we heard ourselves say that our lives are far more touched by our patients, by our students, by others than we imagined. It is a way of knowing how God is present and active among us, how God is here. That is the sense of it.

A third model, which some have tried in your province, has a lot of power to it. One person shares an event or an experience, then the others enter into a common reflection and dialogue on her experience. Over time, each one has a chance to share her story and have the community reflect on it.

It is good to experiment with different ways of doing apostolic reflection. There is freedom to do so. The key to sharing is to share something that was important to you during the past week. It does not have to be something of great moment. It has to be important to you, it has to have touched your life in some way. The underlying assumption is that God is there, obliquely or directly in your experience. Remember the sister from Liverpool said, "We share with Him and with each other, joys, sorrows, disappointments, visions for the future." The greatest treasure we have is our own lives. If we find ourselves in a community which invites us to share our lives with one another, it is a very powerful thing for the future.

A person who has meant a great deal to me is a Vietnamese monk by the name of Thich Nhat Hanh. He was the head of the Vietnamese Peace delegation in 1974-76 in Paris. He met Thomas Merton one time, and after the meeting Merton said, "Thich Nhat Hanh is my brother." He is an immensely centered and spiritual person. He said in a recent talk, "People ask me, what is the way to peace. But there is no way to peace." Everyone was surprised. "Peace is the way," he said. When you think of it, it is really true. There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

What is the way to apostolic sharing? There is no way. Apostolic sharing is the way. What is the way to discernment? There is no way. Discernment is the way. Unrestricted readiness is the way. What has

been on the margins has become the center. What have been ways and means in our lives have become the substance. Apostolic sharing is at the heart of our existence. Why? Because that is the nature of community. Not just to be at the same address, or the same work, but to share our lives--a conscious, free, vulnerable, chosen communion and sharing with one another about that which is important in our lives, namely our apostolate, our lives and our spirit. Something radical is happening.

As we pursue Vincentian discernment and Vincentian apostolic reflection, we can ask ourselves: what are their benchmarks? There are a few key ones.

Firstly, *the God who called us here is here*. We come together in the belief that we have been called together. God has called us to come together, not to negotiate but to live together. The God who has called us is in our midst. We have come together in God.

Secondly, *God is present in each person and in the community*. This grouping of people will never happen again. The Spirit is present in a unique way each time we come together. A house of four or five people is a unique place of grace. If someone else comes, it is a new group. If we have a group of four people and a fifth person comes, we cannot simply expect that person to blend in. No, the new person is a new gift. There is a new mix, and there are twenty-five new relationships that have to be considered and shared. Everyone is a gift. Each community has its own uniqueness. It does not mean, of course, that there is not anyone who is hard to get along with. It simply means that this is a place of grace.

Thirdly, *do not tread on the heels of Providence*. Time is on God's side, and, consequently, on ours. We are invited to set aside our timetables and agendas, and abide in God's time. At the heart of our coming together is the Eternal Presence. We have come together to be touched and led by the Presence of God.

Fourth, *in contemplating, loving, and serving the poor, the poor one is Jesus Christ*. This is from the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity, I think from the original Constitutions. You are stating that the substance of your lives is to contemplate, love, and serve God in poor person.

Finally, *the journey is a shared and corporate one*. There is great strength in sharing your call, because of the power of the Body. Christians know that Divine Life at its heart is shared, because we know the shared life of the Trinity. When we know the Trinity, we

know that not only created life is lived in sharing, but divine life is a shared life. Louise is very strong on the Trinity and the Holy Spirit.

We are being brought back to the substance of our lives: the capacity, the vocation, the opportunity to share our lives with one another in freedom, in respect, in attentiveness, in listening and in love. Apostolic sharing is a way of life, and perhaps the gift for our time. Let us thank and praise God that the Spirit is leading us in the way of apostolic reflection.²

The spirit of the Company consists in giving itself to God to love Our Lord and serve him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor, in their own homes or elsewhere, to teach young girls and children and, in general, all those whom divine providence sends you.

(Saint Vincent de Paul, conference to the Daughters of Charity, 9 February 1653)

²The following process was then used in small groups. First, they took some time for silent reflection on what had been important in each one's life in the last week. Then, in groups of five, they went around the circle and shared something that had been important to them in the past week. They did this in the manner of *simple sharing*. Then, they asked themselves as a group the question, "What have we heard ourselves saying?" This was *corporate listening*. At the end they were free to thank and bless God or intercede as they were moved to do so.



The Core Values of Vincentian Education

BY

LOUISE SULLIVAN, D.C.

Introduction

The names of Vincent de Paul and, in recent years, that of his friend and collaborator of thirty-six years, Louise de Marillac, have become synonymous with charity. Together with their followers, the Priests and Brothers of the Mission, the Ladies of Charity, and the Daughters of Charity, they transformed the character of charitable activities in seventeenth-century France by establishing permanent works in health care, education, and social welfare which continue to our day on five continents. The magnitude of their accomplishments, their spectacular success in some areas, however, have, at times, submersed the historical figures of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac as well as the full import of some of their multiple endeavors. The result has too often been the creation of legend at the expense of reality or the concretizing of misconceptions.

One of the victims of such a phenomenon has been education. So numerous were the hospitals, so moving the works with abandoned infants, beggars, and wounded soldiers, that educational institutions — seminaries and schools — seemed almost prosaic and consequently of lesser importance. A study of the social order in seventeenth-century France can leave one with the impression that, while Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and their followers were responding to the urgent cries of a suffering society, the Jesuits and the Ursulines were providing for the educational needs of its youth. Both these congregations arrived in France at the time to open schools for the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie and the nobility, hence the perception that, for the Priests and Brothers of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, education was a relatively minor facet of their far more significant contribution to the evangelization of the rural poor, health care, and social welfare.

Historical studies dealing with the reform and formation of the clergy during the first half of the seventeenth century clearly acknowl-

edge the importance of the role played by Vincent de Paul through the retreats for ordinands, the Tuesday Conferences, and particularly the seminaries. Nevertheless there remains, within as well as outside the Vincentian family, the tendency to look upon these efforts as a secondary part of his life work. One can even quote Vincent himself to support such a view. To Philibert de Brandon, bishop of Périgueux, who, in 1650, had requested Priests of the Mission for a seminary in his diocese, the founder wrote, "You want a seminary and we are obligated to missions. Our principal work is the instruction of country people; the service we render to the ecclesiastical state is only secondary to it."¹

At the same period, Louise de Marillac, in consultation with Vincent de Paul, established "little schools," as they were called, for poor little girls, first in rural areas and later in Paris. These, too, receive little attention. As late as 1977, Jean Delemeau would acknowledge that only in recent years have historians become aware of "the considerable role that the Daughters of Charity played in overcoming illiteracy among the female population in France."²

A partial explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the fact that, unlike Charles Démi, Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, or Angela Merici, neither Vincent de Paul nor Louise de Marillac founded a teaching order nor did either of them write a treatise on education. What we know of their ideas, methods, and goals must be gleaned from literally thousands of pages of correspondence, conferences, and related documents. More importantly, the educational works they established, be they seminaries or "little schools," were not isolated but rather a natural outgrowth of a broader service of the poor from which they cannot be dissociated.

The above observation, however, does not mean that they were of lesser importance. On the contrary, both Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac were teachers and as such were keenly aware of the vital place of education in a holistic approach to service of the poor.

It may appear surprising to link seminaries and "little schools," nevertheless, an examination of the evolution of these works and of the documentation extant concerning them reveals common principles, methodologies, and values which, when combined, make them

¹Vincent de Paul to Philibert de Brandon, 20 July 1650, *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, C.M., 14 vols. (Paris: 1920-1926), 4:42. (Hereinafter cited as CED).

²Jean Delemeau, *Le Christianisme va-t-il mourir?* (Paris: Hachette, 1977), 98.

uniquely "Vincentian." As such, they remain the basis of the Core Values of Vincentian Education, whatever its form, and must be studied together, along with significant data from the lives and experiences of their founders.

It is not our purpose here to recount in any detail the lives of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, but it is essential to reflect briefly on the circumstances and events in them which directly or indirectly influenced their approach to education. Before doing so, one further observation appears useful. For both of them, everything was rooted in life, in events, and in their personal experiences, be they human or spiritual.

Any attempt to delimit or define their views and the resultant works must take into consideration, as applying to both of them and to all their undertakings, the oft-repeated statement with which Vincent de Paul concluded his letter of 5 August, 1642 to Bernard Codoing. After giving his advice to the superior in Rome, he said, "Such is my faith and such is my experience."³ Despite their extraordinary intellectual and organizational abilities, they were, in the final analysis, a man and woman of faith seeking to discern the will of God and to find pragmatic solutions to the overwhelming needs of the poor of their era. They prayerfully sought to read the signs of the times and to discover the voice of God speaking to them in the sometimes banal, sometimes dramatic events in their own spiritual journeys.

Faith and Experience of Vincent de Paul, 1581-1617

Childhood—Studies—Travels—"Career"

Life would teach Vincent de Paul early the value of education and the poverty of ignorance. Born in 1581 in Pouy, a tiny village in southwestern France, into a family of simple, hard-working peasants, he, like all the children of his village, shared in the work of the farm

³CED, 2: 282. See also *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*. I *Correspondence*, vol. 1 (1607-1639), newly translated, edited, and annotated from the 1920 edition of Pierre Coste, C.M., ed. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., trans. Helen Marie Law, D.C., John Marie Poole, D.C., James R. King, C.M., Francis Germovnik, C.M., annotated John W. Carven, C.M., (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1985); vol. 2 (January 1640-July 1646), ed. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., trans. Marie Poole, D.C., Esther Cavanagh, D.C., James R. King, C.M., Francis Germovnik, C.M., annotated John W. Carven, C.M. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1989); vol. 3 (August 1646-March 1650), ed. Marie Poole, D.C., Julia Denton, D.C., Paule Freeburg, D.C., Marian Hamwey, D.C., trans. Marie Poole, D.C., Francis Germovnik, C.M., annotated by John W. Carven, C.M. (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1992), 2:316. (Hereinafter cited as CCD)

and remained, for all practical purposes, illiterate until the age of fifteen. He himself tells us, "I am the son of a poor tiller of the soil and I lived in the country until I was fifteen years old."⁴ It is likely that he would have walked in his father's footsteps had he not been given the opportunity to study and to prepare for the priesthood. Louis Abelly, Vincent's first biographer, explains:

His father saw clearly that this child could do something better than shepherd animals. Thus he decided to send him to study. He did so even more willingly since he was aware of a certain prior from the area who came from a family which was not any better off than his but who had, nevertheless, contributed much to it from the revenue of his benefice in order to assist his brothers. Thus, in his simplicity, he thought that his son, Vincent, through his studies, could one day obtain a benefice and, while serving the Church, assist his family and be a help for the other children.⁵

One should not be too quick to judge Jean de Paul harshly. While his desire to see his son become a priest surely had human rather than spiritual motivation, it must be remembered that the Church was the sole means for a boy of his class to escape, if not poverty, at least a modest, difficult life. Moreover, if Vincent was hardly "Saint Vincent" at the age of fifteen and shared fully his father's ambitions for him, he was, nevertheless, a young man with solid faith and moral values which he had developed in the midst of his family. When speaking later of poor peasants, like those among whom he had spent his childhood, he exclaimed, "If there is a true religion . . . it is among them; it is among those poor people that true religion and a living faith are preserved."⁶ The grace of God and of vocation had good soil in which to grow.

Thus it was that, in 1595, Vincent was sent to the neighboring city of Dax to study at the Collège des Cordeliers. The school was small

⁴Ibid., 9: 81.

⁵Louis Abelly, *Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gaume, 1891)1:8; English translation, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul, Founder and First Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M., introduction by Stafford Poole, C.M., index by Edward R. Udovic, C.M., 3 vols. (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993), 1:36.

⁶Repetition of prayer, 24 July, 1655, CED, 11: 200-201.

and the curriculum limited but Vincent learned reading, writing, grammar, and Latin sufficiently well to enable him to begin his studies in theology two years later at the University of Toulouse. While a student in Dax, the young Vincent attracted the attention of a certain Monsieur de Comet, a lawyer at the Presidial Court of Dax as well as a judge in Pouy. The lawyer became his patron and brought him into his home as a tutor for his sons, thus introducing Vincent to teaching, an avocation at which he would excel. He was fully aware of his debt to Monsieur Comet who would encourage his vocation and urge him to continue his studies at the University of Toulouse. In a letter written in 1608, Vincent expressed his gratitude for the "paternal care" that Monsieur de Comet had taken of him and of his affairs and of his desire to repay him for "all the good that a father can do for his own son."⁷

With Monsieur de Comet's encouragement and the full support of Jean de Paul who made the extraordinary gesture for a "tiller of the soil" of selling a yoke of oxen to help to defray his expenses, Vincent set out for Toulouse. He was already a cleric, having received tonsure the previous year.

Vincent's decision to study at the University of Toulouse is worthy of note. His biographer, Pierre Coste, points out that, like many young men of the time, he could have pursued his theological studies close to home but that he did not do so because "he was ambitious to acquire knowledge and realized that, under the guidance of the learned and experienced masters of some famous university, his progress would be more rapid."⁸ The school of theology at the prestigious University of Toulouse, which was frequented by students from all areas of France and even abroad, corresponded perfectly to his desires. By selecting Toulouse, with the financial strain it would place on his family as well as himself, Vincent had determined not only to continue his studies but to obtain the very best education available to him.

This detail is significant for our purposes because it helps to dispel the all-too-pervasive view of Vincent de Paul as an "anti-intellectual." The seeming reluctance to explore his ideas on education in any comprehensive way may well be rooted in this image of the saint which some of his own words reinforce. He calls himself a "scholar of

⁷Vincent de Paul to Monsieur de Comet, 28 February 1608, *CED*, I: 14; *CCD*, I: 12.

⁸Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1987), I: 16.

the fourth form," the form he had completed when he left Dax, and he seemed to delight in shocking the great ones of his day by reminding them that he was only an "ignorant peasant." The decision to spend seven years at Toulouse in pursuit of a bachelor of theology degree, however, tells another story, as does a later letter to his mother in which he expresses the desire to have his brother send one of his nephews to study.⁹

It is certainly true that Vincent was not a theorist. He abhorred ideal speculation and lofty theories that failed to produce concrete results. He was essentially a pragmatist and a man of action. As few men or women have done before or since, he was able to read the signs of the times and to find practical, efficacious solutions to complex problems. Such theory as there was came after the fact and from experience and can be discovered only from the study of all available texts on a given topic. Moreover, the urgency and immediacy of his responses to pressing needs occasionally produce contradictory statements. However, none of this is a reflection of a lack of appreciation on his part of the value and importance of education. Vincent was too intelligent and too much of a realist not to realize that, without it, he would probably never have left his native village and the works of charity to which God was calling him might never have been accomplished. Upbringing, personality, and experience, not anti-intellectualism, were the basis of his preference for the concrete.

Peasant: Vincent constantly referred to his peasant origin. The thirteen volumes of Coste reveal the psychology and the mentality of the country. This is reflected in his slowness to act, his attitude toward money and toward the rich, his manner of speaking about his foundations and about Divine Providence but most particularly in his comfortableness with and his respect for peasants. In his famous conference "On Imitating the Conduct of Good Country Girls" he reminds the Daughters of Charity of his origins and of the fact that he knows peasants "from experience and indeed by nature."¹⁰

The simplicity he grew up with would lead him to prefer questions and answers in teaching rather than lecture/recitation, so sacrosanct in French education. Contrary to an opinion that is too often heard, Vincent's theological preparation during his seven years in Toulouse was solid. What distinguished him from his illustrious con-

⁹Vincent de Paul to his mother, 17 February 1610, CED, 1: 19; CCD, 1: 16.

¹⁰CED, 9: 81.

temporaries was his gift for translating theological truths into simple and dynamic language. This ability, in great part, was due to the fact that he always remained what he was: a peasant.

Gascon. Vincent de Paul was not only a peasant, he was a Gascon peasant. He was very conscious of this, and curiously for a man so humble, very proud of it. In a letter to Firmin Get, superior at Marseilles, he reproved his confrere for not telling him that he had borrowed money from the administrators of the hospital there. He said that he was surprised by this apparent attempt to conceal the truth, then he added, "If you were a Gascon . . . I would not find that strange."¹¹ More interesting, perhaps, than the letter itself, is the remark by the Vincentian scholar, Jean Morin, who cited it. He says, "We are not trying to prove from these lines that Monsieur Vincent generally only told half the truth. However, twenty-five years of living in the south-west have shown me that Gascons have a very particular way of regarding reality and of discerning the essential in that which is relative." Father Morin then adds, "In the writings of Saint Vincent there are many nuances that must be grasped and even some apparent contradictions which can surprise those who are not Gascon. When he was speaking, there can be no doubt but that the tone of his voice and his facial expression often modified the severity of what he was saying or clarified the content."¹²

In his remarks, Father Morin is echoing the words of one of Vincent's secretaries, Brother Bertrand Ducournau, who was himself a Gascon. In the conference of 6 December 1658, which he transcribed, he says apropos of Vincent's statements, "*Nota.* As he was saying this, he made certain gestures with his hands, movements of his head, and spoke in a rather disdainful tone of voice which expressed what he meant better than what he was saying."¹³

It is useful to bear this in mind when quoting the founder, particularly when using isolated statements to prove a point. To absolutize every word, to fail to distinguish between the essential and what, for him, was merely relative, in a word, to forget a fundamental facet of Vincent de Paul's character, namely his Gascon roots, is to risk a misunderstanding of the man and the message. Nowhere is there a

¹¹Vincent de Paul to Firmin Get, 16 October 1654, *ibid.*, 5: 198-99.

¹²Jean Morin, *Carnets Vincentiens*, 3 vols. (Toulouse: Animation Vincentienne, 1991), 3: 54-55.

¹³Conference to the Priests of the Mission, 6 December 1658, *CED*, 12: 93.

greater danger of this than in a study of his remarks on learning and education.

But let us return to Toulouse. Vincent's experience there would mark his attitude toward learning and his approach to education.

First, while at Toulouse, Vincent pursued his frenetic race toward early ordination. He was ordained to the priesthood 23 September 1600, eight months before his twentieth birthday, at Château-l'Évêque, near Périgueux, by the elderly and nearly blind François de Bourdelle, bishop of Périgueux. Following ordination he returned to his studies until he received his bachelor of theology degree in 1604. What is significant in all of this for our purposes is the fact that in later years Vincent would look back on his preparation for holy orders and would realize that, while his theological studies were solid, he lacked both spiritual formation and practical training for the functions of a parish priest. These he saw as grave deficiencies that he would work to remedy.

Second, the University of Toulouse was a hotbed of intellectual controversy. Most of it was in the school of law, but the school of theology was not exempt. While Vincent remained aloof from it, as much for practicality as for principle, he saw its divisive effects. Later he would seek to avoid it in the Congregation of the Mission and in the seminaries for which he was responsible. This is particularly evident with regard to Jansenism.

Third, during Vincent's first year at Toulouse, his father died. In his will, dated 7 February 1598, Jean de Paul urged his family to spare "no sacrifice"¹⁴ to help Vincent to continue his studies. His family, particularly his mother, was fully in accord but Vincent refused their assistance. Instead he turned to the means that had served him well in Dax, namely teaching.

When his financial resources were exhausted, he accepted the offer of a small academy for boys in Buzet, a village about fifteen miles from Toulouse. He received the young boarders and taught them himself. His reputation as an excellent teacher spread quickly. He soon had pupils from Toulouse as well as children of the local gentry. So successful would he be, that he was soon able to transfer the school to Toulouse where it continued to flourish until the end of his studies there.

¹⁴Abelly, *Vie*, I: 12; Coste, *Life and Works*, I: 40.

The conferral of the Bachelor of Theology degree upon Vincent de Paul gave him the right to expound the second book of the *Sentences* at the university. The text dealt with angels, creation, grace, sin, and free will, topics which aroused the passions of seventeenth-century theologians. There is no evidence to indicate whether he did so or not but, if he did, it could only have been for a short time, certainly not more than a year. The only other degree obtained by Vincent de Paul would be a licentiate in canon law from the University of Paris. He used this title for the first time 2 March, 1624.¹⁵ What we do know for certain is that, as Vincent de Paul came to the end of his studies in Toulouse, he was solidly grounded in theology and he was an excellent, experienced teacher.

Education, therefore, seemed to be the work of predilection for Vincent de Paul. Events would change that, at least temporarily. The next years in his life read like an adventure novel. For our purposes it suffices to say that, when he decided to seek his fortune in Paris in 1608, he was still in quest of an "honest retirement."¹⁶ He was twenty-seven! The conversion of 1617 was still in the distant future.

Of the multiple events leading to 1617, two are significant for our study of Vincent de Paul as educator, namely his tenure as pastor in Clichy (1612-1613) and his first period of residence with the Gondis (1613-1617). Both would come about through the influence of the future Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, whom Vincent would meet when he became a chaplain in the household of Queen Marguerite de Valois in 1610.

Clichy. Let us look at the human as well as the spiritual influences that led Vincent to Clichy and to a realization of the true meaning of his priesthood. In this the role of Bérulle is of capital importance. It was precisely at this time that the future cardinal founded the Oratory for the reform of the clergy to which he wanted to restore "authority, holiness, and learning."¹⁷

The few months that Vincent spent with the Oratorians certainly raised his consciousness and reinforced his desire "to begin a truly ecclesiastical life."¹⁸ In 1656, he acknowledged that his realization of the grandeur of the priestly vocation, "the most sublime on earth,"¹⁹

¹⁵CED, 13: 60, note 1.

¹⁶Vincent de Paul to his mother, 17 February 1610, CED, 1: 18; CCD, 1: 15.

¹⁷See Paul Cochois, *Bérulle et l'École française* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 25-30.

¹⁸Abelly, *Vie*, 1: 24; Coste, *Life and Works*, 1: 52.

¹⁹Vincent de Paul to the Canon de Saint Martin, n.d., CED, 5: 568.

came only with the passage of time. He wrote to the Canon of Saint-Martin, "if I had known what the [priesthood] was when I had the temerity to enter it, I would have preferred to till the soil rather than to commit myself to it."²⁰

If the concepts and goals developed under the influence of Bérulle were important, it was the lived experience—the first in Vincent's twelve years of priesthood—of sixteen months as pastor of Clichy that oriented his future work for the reform and formation of the clergy. The new pastor saw very quickly that, despite his solid theological preparation, he had no training for his role. Nor did most of the neighboring parish priests. Moving, as he always would, from perceived need to a practical solution, he collaborated with them to supply for this. His example and influence had a salutary effect. More importantly, for our purposes, he started a little school for ten to twelve young boys who aspired to the priesthood. This he later handed over to his successor, Father Jean Souillard, but he remained interested in it and continued, in later years, to send him pupils.

As Vincent de Paul moved closer to his conversion and to the total gift of himself to God for the service of the poor, the experience of Clichy would lead him quite naturally to include, in that service, the reform and formation of the clergy.

The tenure as parish priest in Clichy was a hiatus of calm and happiness in an otherwise turbulent era in Vincent de Paul's life. Looking back on it in 1653, when he and his Priests of the Mission were well established in seminary work, he told the Daughters of Charity, "I was once a country priest. . . . I was so happy that I used to say to myself, 'How happy you are to have such good people. . . . I think the Pope himself is not so happy as a parish priest in the midst of such good-hearted people.'"²¹ But the happiness would not last. Once again Bérulle would intervene in Vincent's life, this time asking him to become a tutor in the household of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys.

First period of residence with the Gondis. Given subsequent events, it is easy to see the direct intervention of Divine Providence in this request. For Vincent, however, it was clearly a disappointment. Nevertheless, he acquiesced and thus, once again, became primarily a teacher.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 27 July 1653, *ibid.*, 9: 646.

The Gondis had three sons: the eldest, Pierre, was eleven; the second, Henri, two or three; and the youngest, Jean-François-Paul, only an infant. Thus it was for Pierre and not for the future Cardinal de Retz that a tutor was needed. Vincent assumed full responsibility for the child's intellectual, moral, and religious formation. He was also placed in charge of the large household staff. He gave them religious instruction, prepared them for the reception of the sacraments, and generally functioned as their parish priest. In 1614-1615, he became the spiritual director for Madame de Gondi. Contrary to a long held belief, Vincent also continued as parish priest of Clichy, returning there as often as his duties would permit.

Vincent's growing influence in the Gondi household would seem to have, at long last, provided him with the secure position he had been seeking since ordination. God, however, had other designs.

Conversion—Plenitude of Vocation

1617-1660

It is universally agreed that the year 1617 was the turning point in Vincent de Paul's existence. At the age of thirty-six, he abandoned his dreams of human success to dedicate himself totally to God and to the service of the clergy. Twice between January and late August of that year God intervened directly and perceptibly in his life.

Gannes—Folleville

During a stay on the Gondi estates in Picardy, Vincent was called to the bedside of a dying man whom everyone considered virtuous. After receiving absolution, the penitent professed his joy to all who would listen of at last being freed of the serious sins of a lifetime. The next day, 25 January, at Madame de Gondi's insistence, Vincent preached to the parish. A large crowd came to listen and to go to confession. Afterwards he would look upon this as the first sermon of the Mission and the beginning of the work to which God was calling him. It was also a conversion in the strict sense of the word. With shocking clarity he saw the mediocrity of his priestly life to this point. While he had been seeking a comfortable career in the chateaux of the rich, the poor of the countryside, the stock from which he came, were living and dying with no one, or practically no one, to evangelize them.

There would be no turning back but, lest he forget, he had another potent reminder during another stay on the Gondi estates, this time in 1620 at Montmirail-Marchais. A Huguenot, whom Vincent was trying to bring back to the Church, chided him with the scandalous state of the clergy. Years later, in a conference, he would recall the stinging attack.

Sir, you have taught me that the Church of Rome is guided by the Holy Spirit. However, that is something I cannot believe because, on one hand, I see the Catholics of the countryside abandoned to ignorant and vicious pastors. The people receive no instruction concerning their obligations. Most of them do not even know what the Christian religion is. On the other hand, I see the cities filled with idle priests and monks. Paris probably has 10,000 of them who leave these poor country people in this terrible ignorance which is causing their perdition. And you want to persuade me that all that is transpiring under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I will never believe it.²²

The Huguenot's accusations are the clearest formulation of the connection between the abandonment of the peasants and the lack of good priests. The excellence of the missionary vocation, born at Folleville, is that it seeks to remedy this double problem. The parallelism between the Huguenot's words and the "Contract of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission" and the bull *Salvatoris nostri* are striking.²³ They reveal the education of the clergy as an integral part of the original vocation of Vincent de Paul and of the Congregation of the Mission.

Châtillon

Let us turn now to the second significant event of 1617 for the future works of Vincent de Paul and for his personal conversion. The experience of Châtillon is more complex than that of Folleville. In July 1617, again at the request of Bérulle, Vincent left the Gondi residence

²²Fragment of a conference, *ibid.*, 11: 34.

²³*Ibid.*, 13: 197-98, 258-59.

and became the pastor of Châtillon-les-Dombes, a small village in Bresse, not far from the Swiss border. For the first time Vincent is faced by a social problem: material poverty. At Folleville, he had become aware of the full extent of the spiritual abandonment of the poor. At Châtillon, he is confronted by society's refusal to respond to their physical and material needs.

His immediate response is to preach and he obtains the desired result. The women of the parish rushed to the aid of the family where "everyone was sick."²⁴ The outpouring of generosity led Vincent to see the need for organization if charitable activity was to be long-lasting and effective. The result was the founding, a few days later, of the first Confraternity of Charity. Just as he will always refer to Folleville when speaking of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, so he will refer to Châtillon when recalling the origin of the Ladies of Charity and, later, of the Daughters of Charity.

Important as this was, however, it is somewhat simplistic to limit Vincent's work in Châtillon to a response, albeit a far-reaching one, to the material needs of the poor. If Bérulle asked him to accept the parish, it was because Protestantism was making inroads there due, in large measure, to the neglect and scandalous behavior of the local clergy. Vincent was sent primarily to provide an example of a zealous priest "in the midst of [his] people"²⁵ that would lead his fellow priests to adopt a way of life more in keeping with their calling. In this he was remarkably successful, and it was this conversion which led to the conversion of the parishioners, thus permitting the birth of Vincentian charity. Once again we find the formation of the clergy at the root of Vincent's vocation and of his great works.

While it appears, from all that has been said, that the education of the clergy was an integral part of the Vincentian Mission from its origin, several years would still have to elapse before there would be any concrete initiatives. In a conference of 6 December 1658, the founder told his confreres that "in the beginning" there had been no thought of working at the formation of the clergy. The Company had been concerned only with the growth in holiness of its members and the evangelization of the poor. Then he added, in tones echoing Saint

²⁴Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 22 January 1645, *ibid.*, 9: 209.

²⁵Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 27 July 1653, *ibid.*, 9: 646.

Paul, "in the fullness of time [God] called upon us to contribute to the formation of good priests, to provide good pastors for the parishes, and to show them what they must know and practice."²⁶

The first initiative, following the founding of the Congregation of the Mission in 1625, would be an instrument intended for another purpose, namely the missions. We learn from Abelly that the missionaries were called upon not only to work with the laity during the period of a mission but also, by means of spiritual conferences, to assist the clergy.²⁷ In many instances they had a positive influence and conversions resulted. Nevertheless, experience soon taught Vincent that it was quasi-impossible to reform priests set in their ways and that formation for those not yet ordained was what was needed. From this notion, four forms of Vincentian formation for the clergy would be born: retreats for ordinands, Tuesday Conferences, spiritual retreats, and seminaries. Since Vincentian universities are an evolution of the seminaries, it is only with them that we will deal here.

In the beginning of his work with the clergy, Vincent used already existing works (the missions) or ones which could be accomplished quickly (retreats for ordinands). These latter, the result of a meeting between Vincent and Augustin Potier, bishop of Beauvais, during the summer of 1628, were an emergency solution. They were, quite simply, intensive spiritual and professional courses for the ordinands during the two to three weeks prior to ordination. A modest undertaking to be sure and hardly adequate, but there were few options. The Council of Trent had mandated the creation of seminaries in 1563, but its decrees were not formally accepted in France until 1615. With their limitations, the retreats were the most effective and practical way for improving the formation of the clergy. Their use spread rapidly. They became obligatory for the archdiocese of Paris and in 1659, by the order of Pope Alexander VII, for all those preparing for ordination in Rome. If we are to believe Abelly, 12,000 ordinands made these retreats at Saint-Lazare during Vincent's lifetime.²⁸

For our purposes, there are a few elements here calling for our attention since they show attributes of Vincent, the educator, and will

²⁶Ibid., 12: 84.

²⁷See Abelly, *Vie*, I: 129.

²⁸Ibid., 1, book 2: 116-17. Abelly speaks of the number of ordinations per year in Paris: six in 1631-1643; five thereafter with seventy to ninety participants in each, plus seminarians from other dioceses after 1638.

appear later in the seminaries namely *creativity* and *realism*. It must be remembered that there was no model. Vincent, with his practical sense, did not try to work alone nor even entirely within the Congregation of the Mission. Rather he turned to men he knew, respected, and had worked with: Nicolas Pavillon, bishop of Alet; François Perrochel, bishop of Boulogne; and Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Sulpicians. Together they composed "Notes for Ordinands." Anticipating possible criticism or opposition, they submitted the text to the theologians of the Sorbonne and obtained the assurance that they contained the essentials. The most learned and saintly men were asked to give conferences during the retreats.

Thus, the undertaking was collaborative and won wide support.²⁹ It was also costly, especially once the archbishop of Paris, in the transfer of the Priory of Saint-Lazare to the Congregation of the Mission, laid upon Vincent the obligation of providing them gratis "for all such clerics as [he] would send."³⁰ To defray expenses, Vincent turned, as he did for his works of charity, to the wealthy women of the capital. Their generosity helped to sustain the effort.

The method of instruction broke with tradition. There were certainly conferences, but the workshop format of small groups was widely used. Moreover, the curriculum was theoretical and professional. The ordinands were taught not only what to do but how to do it. Unlike Vincent arriving at Clichy, these young men were being prepared to function in the pastoral setting. The time frame was all too short, but creativity and flexibility fostered a holistic approach to the formation of future priests--a formation that would be maintained by the "Tuesday Conferences."

But Vincent did not need his Jansenist critics³¹ to know that something more was essential, that the young men preparing for the priesthood needed to spend a prolonged period in the seminary, if, as he told the Bishop of Dax, "the face of [the] clergy" was to be truly "changed."³² Thus, the work of seminaries began in earnest. It must be pointed out that Vincent de Paul was not the only one dedicated, at this period, to finding the formula for the reform and formation of the clergy. He labored beside Bérulle, Olier, and Adrien Bourdoise but,

²⁹See conference to the Priests of the Mission, 5 August 1659, *CED*, 12: 288-98.

³⁰"Approbation par l'Archevêque de Paris de l'union de Saint-Lazare à la Mission," 8 January 1632, *CED*, 13: 252.

³¹[Martin de Barcos], *Défense de feu Monsieur Vincent* (Paris: N.P., 1668), 74-80.

³²Vincent de Paul to Jacques Desclaux, bishop of Dax, 2 October 1647, *CED*, 3: 243; *CCD*, 3: 244.

perhaps, more than any of them, he "changed the face of [the] clergy" of France.

How did he do so? What essentially characterized a "Vincentian" seminary? There were twenty of them in France and three in Italy during Vincent's lifetime. We also learn from a letter from Father Charles Nacquart in Madagascar that the Congregation of the Mission was involved in the formation of native clergy there.³³ The work continued to expand after the death of the Founder. On the eve of the French Revolution of 1789, there were 160 seminaries directed by the Congregation of the Mission in Europe. They also had one in Goa, one in Macao, and one in Peking for indigenous vocations.

Let us turn now to the program of study. Vincent's first work in seminaries, properly so called, was at the Collège des Bons-Enfants in 1636. The students were "trained in piety and were also taught Latin and other branches of knowledge that then went to make up the *Litterae Humaniores*."³⁴ Other than this we know practically nothing about the program except that Vincent was very dissatisfied with it. On 13 May 1644, he wrote to Bernard Codoing, "The ordinance of the Council of Trent is to be respected as coming from the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, experience has shown that it has not been successful either in France or in Italy in the manner in which it is carried out, as far as the age of the seminarians is concerned."³⁵ Vincent then went on to list the problems that "experience" had taught him came from placing young men, ready for ordination, in the same institution with children. These were that "some leave before the time; others have no inclination for the ecclesiastical state; still others enter religious orders, while others flee those places to which they are bound by the obligations incurred by their education and prefer to seek their fortune elsewhere."³⁶

It is debated whether or not Vincent was the first to recognize this seemingly obvious problem. What we do know with certitude is that he rectified it as soon as possible. In 1642, he separated the two groups. The older students were housed in a separate wing and had their own regulations as well as their own instructors and program of studies. These students would remain at the Bons-Enfants after the younger ones were transferred to "Petit Saint-Lazare," later named Saint-

³³Charles Nacquart to Vincent de Paul, 9 February 1650, *CED*, 3: 583; *CCD*, 3: 573.

³⁴Coste, *Life and Works*, 1: 259.

³⁵Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, 13 May 1644, *CED*, 2: 459; *CCD*, 2: 505.

³⁶*CED*, 2: 459; *CCD*, 2: 505-06.

Charles. Thus, after 1642, the Congregation of the Mission was directing minor or college seminaries and major seminaries. With the passage of time, their work would be concentrated in major seminaries. What is significant for us here is the process of self-evaluation. Vincent was never satisfied that the work was the best it could be. He constantly examined it in the light of "experience" and sought to improve it. Just nine days before his death, he was still doing so.³⁷

Let us turn our attention now to the program of studies in the major seminaries. First, it should be noted that they were not, nor were they intended to be, complete schools of philosophy and theology. Rather they were centers of spiritual and pastoral formation. The emphasis was on the practical rather than the theoretical. This latter point needs to be examined particularly in light of some of Vincent's own words.

It is certainly true that he admired Bourdoise and the almost entirely practical approach of the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. However, in the text of 18 September 1660, where he said that the formation at the Bons-Enfants should be "practical" in "imitation" of Bourdoise, he did so only after he had stated that the instruction given at the Bons-Enfants in dogmatic theology was "inadequate" and, therefore, that the students should be sent "to the Sorbonne" for it.³⁸ Vincent is not advocating a program without a strong intellectual base, rather he is recognizing the deficiencies of the existing one and, with his customary realism, proposing a viable solution: the Sorbonne for what it did best; the Bons-Enfants for what it could do best. Given the resources at his disposition, this would insure the highest quality program possible.

A further remark on the intellectual formation of future priests, as envisaged by Vincent de Paul, is called for. In the beginning, he was a man in a hurry, striving to provide good priests as quickly as possible for a population in desperate need of them. The result was a somewhat limited intellectual formation. This would change, however, with the passage of time especially after the Congregation of the Mission assumed the direction of diocesan seminaries and had to provide them with well-prepared instructors.³⁹

³⁷CED, 13: 185.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹See Bernard Koch, C.M. "Saint Vincent et la science," *Vincentiana* 3 (1966):90-94.

In general, the Congregation of the Mission would strive to impart an intellectual formation that would produce competent parish priests capable of teaching Christian doctrine, administering the sacraments, and dealing effectively with moral questions. Such competency-based instruction required a new methodology. The question-answer approach—the only one Vincent would allow—replaced lectures and dictation of notes. By the active participation of the students, he sought to insure their clear understanding as well as their mastery of the material taught.

Vincent had never forgotten the stinging rebuke of the Huguenot at Marchais; therefore, all learning had to be allied to spiritual and moral formation. Hearts as well as heads had to be educated. Growth in virtue had to accompany growth in knowledge. On 6 December, 1658, he told his priests, "The third end of our little Institute is to instruct ecclesiastics not only in knowledge so that they may be learned but in virtues so that they may practice them. What do you do, if you give them one without the other? Nothing or practically nothing. Knowledge without virtue is useless and dangerous."⁴⁰

Just as a priest had to have adequate knowledge and solid virtue, so too he had to be professionally prepared to fulfill his functions. The seminarians, therefore, had to have practical experience that would enable them later to preach, to administer the sacraments, and to accomplish effectively the multiple tasks which are the responsibility of a parish priest. Thus there had to be opportunities for "hands-on" experiences. In some places, the seminaries were attached to parishes and everywhere at least two priests who gave missions were in residence and could share their expertise and experiences with the students.

Central to this holistic program of priestly education was the quality of the teachers. On 18 August 1656, Vincent wrote, "As experience has shown, one of the most essential requirements in seminaries is to have [as instructors] interior persons of great holiness who can inspire this spirit in the seminarians."⁴¹ Indeed, the seminary teachers had to be themselves solidly prepared intellectually, spiritually, and professionally for their task because, as Vincent pointed out in the same letter, "no one can give what he does not possess."⁴²

⁴⁰Conference to the Priests of the Mission, 6 December 1658, *CED*, 12: 83.

⁴¹Vincent de Paul to Firmin Get, 18 August 1656, *CED*, 6: 61.

⁴²*Ibid.*

Such a program, administered by such teachers was to become a major factor in the reform and formation of the clergy in seventeenth-century France and subsequently throughout the world. Moreover, the principles and experiences which produced and maintained this educational endeavor are the ones that form the basis of every work of Vincentian education whatever its form or level.

It is significant to note as we conclude this first part of our study on the Core Values of Vincentian Education that Vincent de Paul's vision and efforts were narrowly focused. They included the religious instruction of the poor of the country areas as part of the missions and the education and formation of the clergy in seminaries and through the retreats for ordinands and the Tuesday Conferences.

The work of teaching boys not destined for the priesthood, in a school setting, he would leave to others. However, he was closely involved with the education of poor little girls and the preparation of their teachers through his collaboration of thirty-six years with Louise de Marillac with whom he would found the Daughters of Charity. In their combined efforts and in the faith and experience of Louise de Marillac we discover the second panel of the diptych of "Vincentian" education.

Faith and Experience of Louise de Marillac 1591-1632

Childhood—Marriage—Meeting with Vincent de Paul— Visits to the Confraternities of Charity

The friendship and collaboration between Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, two widely differing personalities, began, somewhat inauspiciously, some time between the end of 1624 and the early part of 1625. Indeed it is difficult to image two people less likely to spend the major part of their adult lives working together. Their friendship, nonetheless, was to prove to be of incalculable significance for the Church and for the poor.

The first contacts would be difficult for the peasant priest and the aristocratic woman but they would both come to appreciate the need they had, spiritually and apostolically, for one another. The differences would remain and even produce some conflict over the years but they would also form the base of their complementarity as they combined their considerable gifts of nature and grace for the service

of God and the poor. According to Louise's biographer, Jean Calvet, Vincentian works became "what they were because Louise de Marillac put her hand to them."⁴³ Nowhere is this more evident than in "Vincentian" education.

Louise de Marillac's background and early life experiences were the antithesis of Vincent de Paul's. Born on 12 August 1591, the "natural" daughter of Louis de Marillac and an unknown mother, she never experienced the love and security of family life. Her health was delicate due, no doubt, at least in part to the conditions in war-torn France at the time of her birth. She was a member of the illustrious Marillac family, which held positions of power and influence in the court of Marie de Médici and Louis XIII, nevertheless, despite her father's love for her and her loyalty during periods of family crisis, she always felt herself an outsider. Her early life was lonely. In it, however, were two events which shaped her future and influenced her approach to education: Poissy and the boarding house of Paris.

Poissy. The exact date of Louise's arrival at the royal monastery of Saint-Louis of Poissy, like so much in her childhood, is unknown. She may well have been an infant but was most certainly no more than three years old when she was confided to the care of her aunt, another Louise de Marillac, who was a Dominican nun there. On 12 January 1595, Louis de Marillac remarried. His little daughter seems to have had no place in his new home. However, God, who often writes straight with crooked lines, provided her with a rich spiritual and intellectual environment that prepared her well for her future role as an educator.

While a cloister, albeit a regular and fervent one, was an abnormal setting in which to raise a child, nevertheless Louise's gifts of nature and grace flourished there. Poissy was not only a spiritual center, it was also a humanistic one. Through the years, guided by her aunt and the other nuns, Louise and other little girls of her social class learned to know God, to love him, and to discover him as Saint Louis, the patron of the monastery, had, hidden under the rags of the poor. This experience enabled her later on to live and work with equal ease with the rich and with the poor village girls who would be the first Daughters of Charity.

At the same time that she was learning reading, writing, literature, painting, and Latin, this little girl, who was mature beyond her years

⁴³Jean Calvet, *Louise de Marillac: A Portrait* (New York: Kennedy, 1959), 14.

because of the suffering she had endured, was developing a love for scripture, liturgical prayer, spiritual reading, and contemplation. It is not at all surprising that, as she grew older, she thought of entering the cloister. It is not difficult to imagine how shattered she must have been when Father Honoré de Champigny, provincial of the Capuchins, refused her request for admission. His reasons are not clear, but his words proved prophetic when he told her that God had "other designs" on her.⁴⁴

Nowhere do we have recorded Louise's reaction to this unexpected rejection. Her spiritual crisis of 1623, however, showed the extent to which she had been marked by it. Moreover, her desire for a life dedicated to reading and contemplation perdured well into her widowhood. Events, Providence, and Vincent de Paul would alter that.

If Poissy provided Louise de Marillac with an intellectual formation well beyond that of the vast majority of women, even of the aristocracy of the era, it hardly seemed the appropriate preparation for a woman who would later be responsible for training young women in the practical aspects of health, education, and social welfare. That she would learn outside the walls of the cloister, in a humble boarding house of Paris.

Boarding House of Paris. It must be stated from the beginning that what we know of this period is limited and often contradictory. Notwithstanding, it seems that following the death of her father in 1604, Louise left Poissy and spent an indeterminate time in a boarding house in Paris run by a woman identified only as a good, devout spinster. Whatever the circumstances, during these years Louise learned the practical things that are so surprising in a woman who was both an intellectual and a mystic. The multiple details required to care for the sick and orphans, to educate little girls, or to form the first Daughters of Charity had to have been learned somewhere. The humble boarding house of Paris was likely the place.

Denied admission into the cloister, Louise de Marillac could but accept the only option open to her, marriage. The Marillacs, for their interests rather than hers, arranged Louise's marriage, on 4 February 1613, to Antoine Le Gras, personal secretary to the regent, Marie de Médici. It seems, however, to have been a happy one especially after the birth of their son, Michel, whose education she undertook. This

⁴⁴Cited in M. D. Poinset, *De l'anxiété à la sainteté: Louise de Marillac* (Paris: Fayard, 1959), 33.

happiness, however, would prove short-lived. The prolonged illness of her husband, leading to his death in December 1625, and the limitations of her child, who would always be a source of anguish for her, plunged her into the dark night of the soul.

Relief would come only on Pentecost Sunday, 1623, when her doubts would dissipate and she felt assured that one day she would be able to give herself to God as she desired.⁴⁵ In the designs of God this would come about through her friendship and collaboration with Vincent de Paul who became her spiritual director sometime in the months prior to Antoine Le Gras' death.

1625-1632. Little by little, as their relationship grew, Vincent began to involve her in his charitable endeavors. Her contributions at first were modest but then, on 6 May 1629, he sent her to visit the Confraternity of Charity of Montmirail. Begun by Vincent in Châtillon in 1617, the confraternities had flourished in the beginning and had spread throughout France. With the passage of time, some of them had lost their original spirit. Someone had to visit them, study their activities, correct abuses, and rekindle the zeal of the members. In the eyes of Vincent de Paul, no one seemed better suited to undertake this task than Louise de Marillac who now felt confident enough to emerge from her solitude and engage in personal charitable activity. In her *Spiritual Writings* we find detailed accounts of these visits that spanned four years. They reveal her keen intelligence, organizational ability, and capacity for leadership. The transformation was startling. She had become a woman of decision, Vincent de Paul's collaborator and equal.

The role of the Confraternities of Charity, as originally conceived, had been to meet the needs of the sick poor in their homes. During her visits, Louise worked to help the members improve this service. Her ability to assess situations and to read the signs of the times was as great as Vincent's, and she quickly saw another unmet need: the lack of even minimal instruction for the little girls of the countryside. She immediately sought a remedy. Her first biographer, Nicolas Gobillon, tells us that she began teaching catechism to the children and, if there was no schoolteacher for them, she stayed long enough to train one.⁴⁶

⁴⁵See *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*, Louise Sullivan, D.C., trans. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 1-2.

⁴⁶See Nicolas Gobillon, *Vie de Mademoiselle Le Gras* (Paris: André, 1676), 33-35.

Vincent de Paul had surely shared with her his experience at Folleville, but she learned first hand of the spiritual poverty of country people when Vincent sent her young women to be trained to work in the confraternities of Paris. These were good, hardworking, honest, and frequently highly intelligent peasants, but most could neither read nor write and their knowledge of the Catholic faith was quasi-nonexistent. Forming them to serve and later to teach others was a monumental challenge for the future foundress and superioress of the Daughters of Charity. The resultant works for every category of poor testify to Louise de Marillac's extraordinary gifts as an educator.

Events moved quickly now. On 29 November 1633 a few of these young women would come together in Louise de Marillac's home to give themselves to God, in community, for the service of the poor. The Daughters of Charity were born.

Servant of the Poor

1633-1660

Louise de Marillac's awareness of the difference that education, however minimal, could make in the life of a young woman was reinforced by her experience with Marguerite Naseau whom Vincent de Paul would call "the first sister who had the happiness of showing others the way,"⁴⁷ although she died in February of 1633 some nine months before the founding of the Daughters of Charity. The details concerning her life and personality are scant. What we do know is that she was a peasant girl from Suresnes, in the Ile de France, who offered her services to Vincent to work with the Confraternities of Charity. She had arrived after a particularly frustrating meeting with the wealthy Ladies of Charity of the capital.

Until his encounter with Marguerite, Vincent had looked to the rich to serve the poor. For the first time he saw the potential for charity in this "good village girl" and others like her. He could but hear in her story echoes of his own. It was, indeed, a remarkable tale. On the ten occasions when he speaks of her, one can easily discern the qualities he so admired in her namely, her creativity in teaching herself to read while tending her flocks; her dedication to teaching others; her courageous even daring initiatives; her tenacity in face of the opposition of

⁴⁷Conference to the Daughters of Charity, July 1642, CED, 9: 77.

the illiterate men of the village who felt threatened by girls being taught to read; and finally her heroic death in the service of a plague victim.

Louise shared Vincent's affection and admiration for Marguerite. A letter from Vincent dated 19 February 1630 reveals that he had sent Marguerite to her immediately to be trained and formed for the service of the poor in the Confraternity of Charity in the parish of Saint-Sauveur.⁴⁸ Her example attracted the attention of the members of other Parisian confraternities and prompted them to seek the services of other village girls like her. And they came! Under Louise's tutelage they would learn to care for the sick and to teach country girls like themselves.

The first time that Louise spoke of education in a letter still extant was on 9 February 1641. However, the fact that it is only a passing mention in a post-script leads us to believe that schools were not a new undertaking for the Daughters of Charity. Louise told Vincent "the sister whom I am suggesting we send with Sister Marie Joly knows how to read, but Sister Marie does not. She could teach poor little girls."⁴⁹ What, then, do we know of these schools?

Characteristics of the "Vincentian" school. After their foundation, the Daughters of Charity collaborated in the work of the Confraternities of Charity. Vincent told them, in August 1641, "You have given yourselves to God for the service of the sick poor and the instruction of youth particularly in country areas."⁵⁰ Little by little, as the years passed, "little schools," as they were called at the time, directed by the Daughters of Charity, opened throughout France. In 1652, they would start one in Warsaw.

Louise also discovered that illiteracy was not limited to the country areas. Poor little girls in Paris also could neither read nor write. So it was that, in 1641, she sought authorization to open a school in the parish of Saint-Laurent where the motherhouse had just been moved. An attentive reading of the official documents dealing with this serve to give us a better understanding of the *raison-d'être* of the "little schools" and what made them "Vincentian." Let us reproduce them in entirety here.

⁴⁸CED, I: 68.

⁴⁹Louise de Marillac to Vincent de Paul, 9 February 1641, *Spiritual Writings*, 48.

⁵⁰Conference to the Daughters of Charity, 16 August 1641, CED, 9: 43.

*Request Presented to the Rector of Notre-Dame de Paris
by Mademoiselle Le Gras*

Monsieur,

Louise de Marillac, widow of Monsieur Le Gras, secretary to the queen, mother of the king, very humbly supplicates Monsieur des Roches, rector of Notre-Dame de Paris, informing him that the sight of the great number of poor in the Saint-Denis district leads her to desire to take charge of their instruction. Should these poor little girls remain steeped in ignorance, it is to be feared that this same ignorance will be harmful to them and render them incapable of cooperating with the grace of God for their salvation. Should you agree, for the glory of God, Monsieur, to give the above-mentioned suppliant the permission required in such cases, thereby allowing the poor the liberty of sending their children free of charge to schools where they would be unhindered by the rich, who do not want those who teach their children to accept and keep poor children so freely, these souls, redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, would be obliged to pray for you, Monsieur, in time and in eternity.

Response of the Rector

Michel le Masle, councilor to the king for both councils of state and private matters, prior and lord des Roches de Saint-Paul, rector and canon of the great metropolitan church of Paris, to our beloved Demoiselle Le Gras, residing in the parish of Saint-Laurent of Paris, greetings of Our Lord.

In consequence of our position as rector of the above-named church of Paris, we are charged with the licensing and administration of the elementary schools operating within this city and in its suburbs and environs. After our own inquiries, the report of your pastor and the testimony of other trustworthy persons who have knowledge of your life, morals and practice of the Catholic religion, you have been found worthy to operate schools.

Therefore, we grant you the necessary license and permit you to operate a school. This you shall do in the Saint-Lazare area of the Saint-Denis district on the condition that you teach poor girls only and do not accept others; that you educate them in good morals, grammar and other pious and honest subjects. You shall do all this after first swearing that you will faithfully and diligently operate these schools in keeping with our statutes and decrees. The present authorization shall be valid until our next synod. Given in Paris under our seal and that of Master Jean Le Vasseur, Apostolic Notary, our ordinary scribe and secretary, in the year of Our Lord sixteen hundred forty-one, on the twenty-ninth day of the month of May.

On the order of my Lord, the Lord Rector. Le Vasseur.⁵¹

From reading the above texts we learn that Louise de Marillac looked upon basic instruction not only as a benefit but as a right of which the poor were deprived precisely because of their poverty. They could not pay and their very presence in a school would offend the richer clientele. She also recognized what Bossuet would call the "Eminent Dignity of the Poor" who had likewise been "redeemed by the blood of the Son of God."⁵² The authorization granted was very precise concerning the specificity of the establishment: to teach poor children only (most likely to avoid competition with paying institutions) and to adhere to the directives given concerning the content of the instruction.

According to the custom in use at the time, Louise must have immediately affixed, to the door or a window of the house, a sign reading:

A LITTLE SCHOOL IS ESTABLISHED IN THIS BUILDING
LOUISE DE MARILLAC
SCHOOLMISTRESS
teaches young children: divine service, reading, writing,
composition and grammar

⁵¹*Spiritual Writings*, 50-51.

⁵²*Ibid.*

Before examining the program and methodology of this and other little schools, a few reflections on education in seventeenth-century France, particularly the education of girls, are in order. When the Venetian ambassador, Marino Giustiniano, visited France in 1535 he wrote that "everybody, no matter how poor, learned to read and write."⁵³ Employers who accepted children as apprentices or families who hired them as domestics had to pledge to send them to school. However, as a result of the devastation of a half-century of civil wars, Henry IV had to acknowledge in 1590 that illiteracy was spreading rapidly throughout the kingdom.

The first half of the seventeenth century would see the foundation in France of religious congregations whose work was the education of youth. However, most of their efforts were in urban areas and frequently with the moneyed class. Vincent would remind the sisters of this in a conference on 16 August 1641. He told them, "The city is almost fully supplied with sisters hence it is only right that you should go to work in the country."⁵⁴ Elsewhere he encouraged Louise to see to it that her Daughters learned "to read and to do needlework so that they might be able to work in the country."⁵⁵ Vincent had already discovered the deplorable state of religious instruction among country people. Moreover, the state assumed no responsibility for children in these areas. Thus it would be primarily (but not exclusively) there that the Daughters of Charity would labor.

The constant interest of Louise in the schools showed the importance she placed on the instruction of children. Her letters to the sisters employed in the schools provide us with significant information about them.

Pupils. The children taught by the Daughters of Charity were girls. The notes of the Council of the Company of 30 October 1647 show that the question of accepting boys was discussed at some length. However, all concerned had finally to admit that this was not possible because both royal and episcopal decrees forbade it. Provision, nonetheless, would be made for boys at the Foundling Hospital but they would not be taught in the same classroom as the girls.

It is interesting to note that there were two categories of girls, namely the little ones who followed the regular program and the older

⁵³Gustave Fagniez, *La femme et la société française dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Hambert, 1929), 12.

⁵⁴*CED*, 9: 43.

⁵⁵Coste, *Life and Works*, 1: 239.

ones. Louise's sensitivity to the needs of this latter group is striking. In her correspondence and in the "Particular Rules for the Sisters Employed in Schools" she urges flexibility in the program telling the sisters to seek out these young women and to fit their instruction to the circumstances of their condition. At a period when the horarium in religious houses was sacrosanct it reveals a willingness to adapt to the needs of the non-traditional student that is centuries ahead of its time.

The pupils in the schools were not only to be girls, they were to be poor girls. As we have seen earlier, congregations such as the Ursulines were appearing to instruct the daughters of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. Poor children were the ones most in need of instruction and this instruction was to be gratis. We find a reference to this concerning the school at Richelieu, "The Daughters of Charity received only poor girls into their school and their services were free. Girls who were better off went to the convent of the Religious of Notre-Dame."⁵⁶ Even here exceptions could be made. If "there is no schoolmistress for the rich" they may be accepted but "the poor must always be preferred" and "the rich may not look down on them."⁵⁷

The program of instruction. It must be admitted that the program was minimal. Its first and major goal was religious instruction. This was true in all educational institutions of the period be they for the rich or for the poor, for boys or for girls. If the Catholic Church hoped to recoup the losses of the Protestant Reformation, it had to be by the religious and moral education of its children.

The catechism that Louise de Marillac composed for use in the schools has been preserved.⁵⁸ It reveals her understanding of the faith but, more importantly, her understanding of children. An intellectual, whose personal meditations are highly abstract, she was able to simplify theological concepts for the young pupils and make them meaningful in their lives. Moreover, she insisted that the children be led to an understanding of the material through simple exchanges with their teachers. Mere recitation would not do. Learning required the active participation of each child. Like Vincent, she is well ahead of her time in this regard. In addition to the catechism children learned their prayers, how to receive the sacraments, and, in general, how to live a good Christian life.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1: 538.

⁵⁷Règles Particulières de la Maîtresse d'école (Paris: N.P. 1672), article 28.

⁵⁸La Compagnie des filles de la Charité: Documents, Elizabeth Charpy, D.C., ed. (Tours: Mame, 1989), 958-69.

Reading was the second major subject in the schools. Louise tried to be creative in the methodology used and sought assistance from the Ursulines for this. She even wanted in the classrooms of the Foundling Hospital the same alphabet cards used in the convent school. Writing does not seem to have been part of the curriculum at least at the beginning. There is a curious reluctance on Louise's part to have even the sisters learn to write. With time, however, she would change her mind and recognize its importance.

Important as were religious instruction and reading and writing, they were not sufficient to enable these little girls to earn a living. For Louise their human dignity and their spiritual well-being required them to learn a trade. Thus, from the beginning, there was to be a professional component in the education provided. The children learned to sew, to make lace, and to make stockings. The education of these children, simple as it was by today's standards, was holistic, providing for the intellectual, spiritual, and professional needs of the young pupils. It would certainly evolve through the years but, at the time, it provided what was probably the best education available for poor girls and enabled countless ones to break the cycle of poverty and to live good, productive lives. As such, it was no small contribution.

Central to the success of this educational project was the quality of the teacher. Louise, later assisted by a young woman trained by the Ursulines, went to great pains to prepare the sisters for their roles as schoolteachers. They learned reading, writing, and Christian doctrine. Louise reminded them in the "Particular Rules" that the schoolmistress "must take great care to learn well herself what she must teach others, particularly in what pertains to matters of faith and morals."⁵⁹

On the other hand, she was afraid that the sisters might take themselves for theologians. Her fear is expressed in a letter to Sister Elisabeth Turgis concerning the catechism composed by Cardinal Bellarmine. She said, "it would be dangerous for our Company to aspire to such learned teaching."⁶⁰ An interesting outcome of this discussion is that, when it was raised at a council meeting, Vincent urged that the sisters in general use the Bellarmine catechism "because if they are to teach, they must know the material."⁶¹ Moreover, he urged Louise herself to explain it to the sisters.

⁵⁹*Règles Particulières*, 11.

⁶⁰Louise de Marillac to Élisabeth Turgis, 6 March 1648, *Spiritual Writings*, 239.

⁶¹Council of 22 March [1648], *CED*, 13: 664.

Climate of school. Once having assured a level of intellectual and professional competence for the schoolteachers, Louise turned her attention to the climate of the school. This may seem basic but one has only to recall the words of Montaigne who cried out against the torture of the schools of his time. He said, "I do not want to abandon [this boy] to the anger and melancholy humor of a choleric schoolmaster. . . . This institution should be run with firm gentleness, not as it is."⁶²

Louise, thus, urged the sisters to make school "welcoming," especially for the older pupils who found it so hard to go. She advised them to blend gentleness, patience, and cordiality with firmness so that they would be "feared and loved at the same time" and that the children would "have confidence" in them.⁶³ Only in such an atmosphere would children grow and develop as well as learn.

Such were the "little schools" of the Daughters of Charity. Although they dealt with a different clientele from the seminaries of the Congregation of the Mission, they shared many of the same values and goals. As such they form an integral part of "Vincentian" education whatever its form or level.

From all that has been said on both the seminaries and the "little schools" let us now try to determine the Core Values that flow from these original works.

Core Values

A thorough examination of the documentation relative to education in the lives and writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac revealed the following values as central to their common mission of evangelization and to the educational process.

(1) *Holistic:* Vincentian education seeks to respond to the intellectual, spiritual, moral and affective needs of the students--educates the heart as well as the head.

(2) *Integrated:* Vincentian education blends the humanistic and the professional, the abstract and the practical.

(3) *Creative:* Vincentian education is ever seeking new or renewed ways to meet changing needs among the student population while maintaining a clear "sense of the possible."

⁶²Michel de Montaigne: *Oeuvres choisies*, J. Radouant, ed. (Paris: Hatier, 1930), 95-96.

⁶³*Règles Particulières*, 10.

(4) *Flexible*: Vincentian education is willing to make the effort to adapt to the needs of the non-traditional student.

(5) *Excellent*: Vincentian education places quality at the center of its educational activities. It seeks this excellence in:

a. teaching: The instructor must not only be competent but must also be efficient, dedicated and reveal “all those virtues required of the students;”

b. methodology: the method employed must be active, challenging, competency based, and enable the student not only to learn but to enjoy doing so;

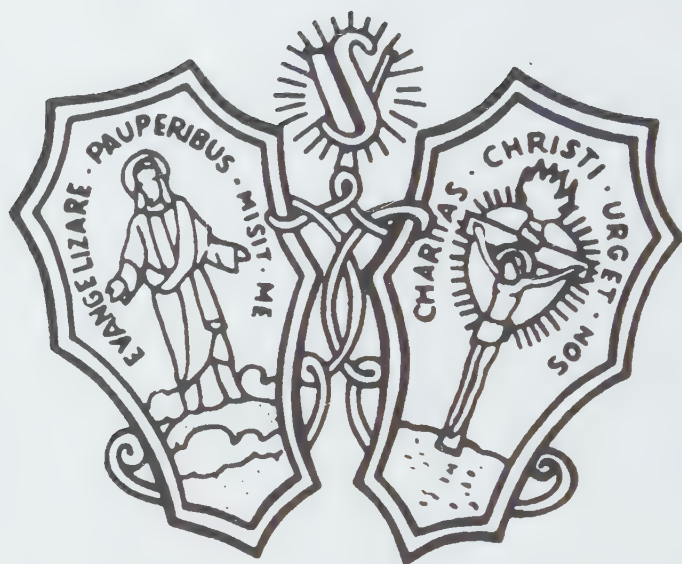
(6) *Person oriented*: the Vincentian educational institution must be one in which all—administration, faculty, staff, and most importantly, students—are respected and valued;

(7) *Collaborative*: Vincentian education seeks to collaborate rather than merely compete with other educational institutions;

(8) *Focused*: Vincentian education is ever viewed as central to the Vincentian mission of service to the poor. As such it strives to integrate this vision into the educational process and to keep the primacy of it alive among all those who share in this common mission.

Conclusion

The research conducted substantiates the major premise of this work namely, that education was central to the Vincentian mission of evangelization of and service to the poor and as such had values unique to it. Indeed, education was the most far reaching form of service since it enabled the poor to break the cycle of poverty, find meaningful employment, and thus enhance their self-respect and confidence. Moreover, by providing quality education to all, the Vincentian institution also was able to transmit this vision of service to others who would later carry it on in their own lives.



The Shadow Side of the Vincentian Mission

BY

JOHN PRAGER, C.M.

The Vincentian vocation is missionary by nature.¹ The truth of this statement does not reside in the fact that some of us preach parish missions or travel to foreign lands. Those specific ministries arise out of the missionary spirit that Vincent de Paul lived and breathed and shared with his family. Something more fundamental is at work here. We are missionaries because the call to follow Jesus, evangelizing the poor, always demands a missionary response.

Our tradition has valued the missionary ideal for more than three centuries. It has been canonized in our rules and documents. The community saints and heroes, who have been proposed to us as our models, have been missionaries. Nonetheless, maintaining the missionary spirit of Saint Vincent has often been a struggle. That constant tension points to a reality which is frequently mentioned in passing, but rarely explored in any depth—the missionary vocation is difficult. Perhaps we idealize the goal and forget the innate problems involved in the process of becoming missionaries? Is it possible that we presume that the goodwill of those who come to serve the poor is enough to produce good missionaries?

Unless we address the realities of the missionary experience that element of the charism recedes into the background. In this article I want to offer a few simple reflections on the Vincentian mission and specifically its shadow side.

1. The Vincentian Missionary Vocation: Following Jesus among the Outcasts

When Jesus says “come and see” to members of the Vincentian family he does it from the periphery of society. He invites us to accompany him into the world of the poor and the wretched of the

¹While only the Daughters of Charity, paraphrasing Vatican II's *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no.2, in no. 2:10 of their Constitutions, explicitly make this statement, the idea is applicable to other branches of the Vincentian family.

earth. He presents us with the challenge to become brothers and sisters to those who have been chewed up by the system and discarded in modernity's march toward progress.

Following Jesus is missionary because it means leaving our place in the center of society and entering another place with the economic and social outcasts.² It is the free choice of making the world of the poor our world. We cross the boundaries of race, class, culture, and status in order to live the gospel with the most abandoned. The missionary seeks to love in unfamiliar territory by being a herald of God's mercy among those who have been shown no mercy.³

What is envisioned here is more than an intellectual exercise which enables us to think of ourselves as missionaries while keeping our distance from the poor. Nor is it some work we do for the indigent while retreating back to another world at night. Rather it is the radical crossing over which makes the poor our life and not our job.

Three things characterize the missionary vocation.⁴

*Insertion*⁵

Saint Louise once criticized a group of sisters for refusing to accept the hardships which the poor endure every day.⁶ She knew that we risk becoming tourists in the land of the poor if we don't assume something of their lifestyle.

²J. M. Ibáñez, "Identidad de la Misión Vicenciana," in *Misión vicenciana y evangelización de los hombres de hoy* (Salamanca: CEME, 1987), 181-212; A. Bastiaensen, "Breves apuntes en torno al carisma y la espiritualidad vicencianos y nuestra conciencia misionera," CLAPVI, no. 68 (1990), 229-237.

³J. Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

⁴Much of the following section has been inspired by recent works in missiology. Although these studies are directed to foreign missionaries, many of the concepts seem to me to be applicable in the Vincentian mission to the poor: A. Bellagamba, *Mission and Ministry in the Global Church* (New York: Orbis books, 1992); D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Mission Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991); W. Burrows, *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading "Redemptoris Missio" and "Dialogue and Proclamation"* (New York: Orbis, 1993); J. Comblin, *The Meaning of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1977); P. Flanagan, ed., *A New Missionary Era* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979); W. Jenkinson and H. O'Sullivan, eds., *Trends in Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991); A. Santos, *Teología sistemática de la misión* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1991); J. Scherer and S. Bevans, eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994); D. C. Senior, D. and C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984).

⁵For more on insertion see: J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence a Western Missionary Problem* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991); A. Cussianovich, A., *Religious Life and the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979); C. Maccise, *Espiritualidad de la nueva evangelización* (Mexico: CRT, 1991).

⁶L. Sullivan, ed. and trans., *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 391.

Entering the world of the poor means leaving behind many of the things we have known in our world of abundance. It means freely choosing to live within the limits which the poor have not chosen. Can we create islands of relative luxury and still speak a credible word about standing with the poor?

More importantly, what happens to a missionary who refuses to give up comfort? Saint Vincent pointed out that if we do not live simply we can say good-bye to the poor.⁷ He means that if we let attachment to our accustomed fashion of living insulate us from the needs and concerns of the poor we will never become missionaries.

It is probably true that we will never be poor like the poor. However, it does not follow that we have to be middle-class like the middle-class. If we honestly want to pitch our tents with the victims, we have to be willing to discard some of our security.

*Inculturation*⁸

Even when a missionary travels only a few blocks geographically, the journey to the poor is a leap across a great divide. Different realities predominate and other values hold sway. The language may or not be the same, but the new context changes the meaning of the words. In short the missionary enters a new culture.⁹

We come to the poor with our own experiences, values and concerns. However, the world looks different from the underside of history. Being missionary means entering this new environment with an attitude of openness and respect. Judgment has to be suspended until one has the capacity to penetrate the real meanings hidden in people's expressions. Inculturation indicates a sensitivity to an unfamiliar world-view and a willingness to dialogue with it in order to learn.

The history of the foreign missions is filled with examples of pastoral agents who attempted to impose their truth. The false assumption that we know what is best or have the *only* true way to God

⁷*Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, C.M., 14 vols. (Paris: 1920-1926), 11: 79. (Hereinafter cited as CED).

⁸For more information on inculturation see: A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990); A. Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture* (London: Chapman, 1994); ———, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992).

⁹Culture here means "a set of symbols, stories, myths and norms for conduct that orient a society or group cognitively, affectively and behaviorally to the world in which it lives." Cited in Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 4.

can still be present in our mission to the poor. It is still heard in phrases like "bringing Christ to the Poor." Saint Vincent, on the other hand, reminded his followers that true religion is found among the poor.¹⁰ He wanted his missionaries to be aware that God speaks and acts in a different context there.

*New Evangelization*¹¹

Jesus, the missionary of the Father, came to evangelize the poor. He knew first hand the "bad news" that destroyed people's lives. In word and deed he sought ways to proclaim God's love in the face of great evil.

If the mission to the poor is truly to be "Good News" the concept of evangelization has to include but move beyond catechetics. Evangelization is not so much the passing on of doctrine as much as it is openness to the presence of God's kingdom. It is the process by which one becomes sensitive to and capable of cooperating with God's liberating love.¹²

New evangelization is not simply updated pastoral techniques. It is a constitutive shift which seeks to encounter new possibilities for evangelization in the changed situation of the modern world. It is not new in the sense of rejecting the old. New evangelization preserves the tradition of the Christian community and the mission of Jesus. It begins, however, within the present context.

This is not the place to develop all the implications for our ministry. However, some of the elements that might be included in the new evangelization would be: a ministry that is more one of accompanying and less one of directing¹³; a pastoral style that facilitates the

¹⁰CED, 12: 170-71 and 200-01.

¹¹L. Boff, *New Evangelization* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992); C. Bravo, "Las tentaciones de la nueva evangelización," *Christus* (Mexico), no. 643 (1991):24-33; P. Trigo, "Criterios de la nueva evangelización," *Christus* (Mexico), no. 643 (1991):14-23.

¹²It seems to me that this is the broader sense of evangelization contained in Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

¹³For more about ministry as accompanying see: C. Boff, *Cómo Trabajar con el Pueblo* (Bogotá: Codecal, 1992); L. Sofield, L. and C. Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1987).

participation of the laity¹⁴; an option for the poor¹⁵; attention to the social, political and economic realities¹⁶; the development of small Christian communities¹⁷; learning to do theology and listen to God's Word from the perspective of the people.¹⁸

2. The Shadow Side of Mission

Following the missionary Jesus is a great risk. Insertion, inculturation, and new evangelization entail jettisoning much that is familiar in order to set out into the unknown. This experience, while it may be the road to salvation, is also a path of painful vulnerability. A psychologist could probably explain the inner dynamic involved in all of these transitions. I prefer simply to describe the experience.¹⁹

As disengagement from accustomed patterns of living occurs and the trusted landmarks which gave stability fade away, insecurity becomes the familiar companion of the missionary. The demand to let go of the past and the simultaneous desire to cling to it produces an ongoing struggle. The old categories no longer seem quite suitable, and yet the new situation appears impenetrable. There is a disturbing sense of being out of harmony with the surrounding environment.

Doubts and confusion usually join insecurity as part of the missionary experience. Some of this has to do with uncertainty about the

¹⁴For more about lay participation see: L. Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1984); F. R. Kinsler, *Ministry by the People* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983); W. Rademacher, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual and Pastoral Handbook* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); J. D. and E. E. Whitehead, *The Emerging Laity: Returning Leadership to the Community of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

¹⁵For more about the option for the poor see: G. Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981); L. González-Carvajal L., *Con los pobres contra la pobreza* (Madrid: 1994); J. O'Brien, *Theology and the Option for the Poor* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992); S. Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality and the Preferential Option for the Poor," *Theological Studies* (1993):242-71; J. Sobrino, J., *The True Church and the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books; 1984).

¹⁶For more about basic Christian Communities see: M. Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987); J. Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies* (1993):512-35; S. Torres and J. Eagleson, eds., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981).

¹⁷For more about the social dimensions of the faith: P. Casaldàliga and J. M. Vigil, *Political Holiness: A Spirituality of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994); D. Dorr, *Option for the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988); J. Haughey, *The Faith That Does Justice* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); J. Holland, J. and P. Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986); J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987).

¹⁸For more about popular reading of the bible and theology see: S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991); L. Boff, and C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986); C. Mesters, *Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984); R. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

¹⁹A useful introduction to this theme is W. Bridges, W., *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Reading: Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1980).

new world one has entered. What is going on here? What do things mean? Why are things done this way? These are all common questions.

On another level, and in a much more pressing way, personal doubts and bafflement come into play. Self-confidence can be seriously shaken as cherished ways of thinking and acting are called into question. Can I really minister here? Am I capable of doing this? Should I be dedicating my life to these people? Is it all worthwhile? Sometimes these queries surface more basic questions like: who am I? How do I relate to other people and God? Lots of questions come to the fore and very few immediate answers present themselves.

Fear, anger and loneliness are three feelings that the missionary knows well. Disorientation and insecurity generate strong reactions. Then the internal and external structures which have defined life in the past change discomfort and pain are usually present.

Sometimes there is a general anxiety about entering the sphere of the unknown. At other times the fear is more localized around concrete experiences and situations. The impact of loss creates a sense of vulnerability. Leaving behind the places, things, persons, or ways of thinking and acting which provided an anchor in the past places the missionary in the precarious position of confronting the world without many resources.

Frequently anger enters the picture together with the fear. A thousand minor irritations and the constant frustration of not really understanding can be maddening. Large or small confrontations centering on the right or wrong way to do things provoke an angry response. Sometimes it is projected outwards toward the people. It can also be turned inward as one becomes exasperated with a constant stream of unwanted experiences. Even God now and then receives an angry blast for having placed us in the situation.

As the missionary exits one world and begins the process of entering another loneliness comes on the scene. Although he may be surrounded by people, their presence does not alleviate the sense of isolation. In fact, they may increase the feeling that one is an outsider. Old friends are not in a position to provide much support because they are far away or do not quite understand the experience. Even God seems to be absent or not listening.

The dark side of mission provokes many reactions. No one enjoys having to confront it. A quick retreat to safety and security is always a strong temptation. Some abandon the project completely. Others try

to live in two worlds at the same time, never really letting go of the past. A few take refuge in denial. Most raise their defenses, at least for a time. Unfortunately none of these responses are particularly helpful ways of entering into mission. They may provide an escape from the experience and protection from the disagreeable feelings. However, they eventually lead us back to where we began.

There are ways of moving through the darkness into the light. In the next section I would like to mention a few of those ways.

3. Conversion: Moving from the Darkness to the Light

Saint Vincent's conversion is the paradigmatic experience of the Vincentian vocation. He found salvation by leaving his own world and entering the world of the poor.²⁰ He offers the hope that the missionary experience is the path to holiness, joy, and peace. If we focus on his process rather than the final result, Vincent's conversion is even more enlightening. Like us he had to struggle with the dark side of the mission to the poor. He hesitated before the demands. This constant temptation was to seek his own comfort and security. It took him more than ten years to finally opt for the poor.²¹

Eventually Saint Vincent discovered that there is no way to follow Jesus in the service of the poor and escape the difficult demands of that vocation. He had to find his way through the shadows. That continues to be the challenge for missionaries to the poor today. Like our founder we have to look for practical measures which will enable us to maneuver through difficulties of mission. I would like to suggest a few possible attitudes and actions that might be helpful.

4. General Advice

Self Knowledge

Everyone brings a personal history, weaknesses, and strengths to mission. In the course of our lives we develop a basic psychological

²⁰I would disagree with Brémond and those who maintain that Saint Vincent went to the poor because he was a saint. It seems to me that just the opposite is true.

²¹Some studies of the conversion are: J. Corera, "La noche oscura de Vicente de Paúl," in *Diez Estudios Vicencianos* (Salamanca: CEME, 1983), 13-40; J. M. Ibáñez, *Vicente de Paúl y los pobres de su tiempo* (Salamanca: CEME 1976), 207-28; J. Renouard, and others, "La experiencia espiritual del Señor Vicente y la nuestra," in *Vicente de Paúl y la evangelización rural* (Salamanca: CEME, 1976), 125-68.

structure which orients the way we relate to life's experiences and other people. A consciousness of who I am and how I react, especially to stressful situations, is indispensable for entering the mission to the poor. A clear notion of one's defenses, tendencies, and inner resources enables one to keep one's bearings and take positive steps while avoiding serious pitfalls.

Besides a general self-knowledge, there is a need to be aware of how one is reacting to this particular situation. No one likes to look at disturbing feelings, weaknesses, or pain. However, it becomes impossible to take positive steps without honestly admitting and confronting that part of the experience.

Having a guide

Speaking about the spiritual life, Thomas Merton says that it is foolish to enter the dark alone.²² That would also apply to the missionary life. There is an incalculable value in being able to count on the wisdom and experience of a mentor or spiritual director. The simple fact of having someone accompany and listen to us is often enough to enable us to clarify the situation. Moreover, the objective opinion of an experienced guide can affirm positive directions as well as point out blind alleys and resistances.

Community

The community exists for the mission. That turns out to be more than an often repeated axiom as one becomes immersed in the world of the poor. The shared vision, the example and the presence of others who have dedicated themselves to the same mission becomes a key support. The formal structures of community give stability in the midst of change. More importantly, the myriad simple ways that members of a community communicate care, concern and trust in the informal situations of daily living are tangible signs that one is not alone in this new world.

²²T. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Press, 1961), 194-96; also *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Doubleday/Image, 1969), 36-37; 92-93.

Friends

It may be stating the obvious to remember that friendship is an irreplaceable human experience. Everyone needs to love and be loved. The missionary is not exempt from this. In the midst of transition, letting-go and loneliness, one needs to know that there are people who are concerned and care about us. One has to trust that friends love us enough to listen and try to understand our experiences.

It is important to stay in contact with friends who will be supportive. The ideal would be to take time out for a visit. But if distance or the demands of ministry make that impractical letters or phone calls are another way to be with friends.

Creating Personal Space

The constant tension of adapting trying to understand and making changes requires a considerable inversion of time and energy. After awhile the stress saps one's capacities. A sensible step is taking personal time to relax. Hobbies, exercise, short trips, keeping a diary, reading, or any other activity one uses for recreation helps keep a balance.

5. Advice from the Vincentian Tradition

All of the above suggestions are pretty well accepted means for dealing with any transition. The call to mission is also a Christian vocation that has theological and spiritual ramifications. The Vincentian tradition offers a wealth of resources in this area. Vincentian spirituality is a spirituality for mission and the apostolate.²³ Most of Saint Vincent's conferences and letters were directed to men and women

²³For more about Vincentian Spirituality see: G. Coluccia, *Espiritualidad vicenciana: Espiritualidad de la Acción* (Salamanca, CEME, 1979); J. M. Ibáñez, *La fe verificada en el amor* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1993); ———, *Vicente de Paul: Realismo y encarnación* (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1982); R. Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul: A Contemporary Spirituality in the Service of the Poor* (New York: New City Press, 1992); T. McKenna, *Praying with Vincent de Paul* (Winona, Minn.: St. Mary's Press, 1994); J. P. Prager, "Reflections on the Renewal of Vincentian Spirituality," *Vincentiana* (1981), 366-83.

either about to enter or trying to sustain a mission to the poor.²⁴ Here I would just like to point out a few insights culled from our tradition.

An Attitude of Humility and Openness

Openness and humility make missionary insertion and inculturation possible. Unless there is a readiness to accept new ways of thinking and acting there is no access to the world of the poor. It takes some effort to maintain an open mind and be willing to learn. That is why humility goes hand in hand with openness. Those who feel that they already have the answers and that their way is the correct way never accompany the poor. Humility allows one to listen to the people and their experience because it creates an attitude of valuing the other.

An Attitude of Mortification and Flexibility

Some people never become missionaries because they are unwilling to let go of anything. They set so many conditions before they are able to leave or bring so much baggage when they go that for all practical purposes they are immovable. Missionary mortification is the willingness to let go of security in order to follow Jesus. It is the spirit of sacrifice which enables one to be flexible in order to stand with the poor.

Simplicity and Clarity of Motives

The principal motivation for the Vincentian mission is the following of Jesus evangelizing the poor. As one encounters the reality of that mission, especially its darker elements, other alternatives spring to mind. Simplicity in terms of single-mindedness keeps the original reason for mission in focus. When unpleasant feelings and negative

²⁴This indicates the difficulty with making Vincentian spirituality a study of the history of ideas. Although it may be convenient for purposes of study, it does not do justice to the Vincentian experience. The Vincentian vocation and the Vincentian spirituality that supports it did not spring from an idea which Saint Vincent received from others and then modified. It seems more correct to say that Vincent experienced God in the poor and used other people's ideas to understand and articulate the experience.

In terms of contemporary Vincentian spirituality, I think that means that updating the founder's themes is not enough. The task is rather to develop ways of finding God in the poor today and maintaining the mission.

experiences augment the attractiveness of taking another route, simple transparency or honesty helps us make choices which are in keeping with the missionary option.²⁵

Gentleness

The poor carry heavy burdens. Every day they come into contact with cold institutions and hard-hearted people. Only gentleness unlocks the door to their world. Unless the missionary acts with sensitivity, the door remains tightly closed. Gentleness is the attitude which translates into such actions as: the effort to understand the concerns of the poor; a willingness to accompany the people without demands and conditions acceptance of the unfamiliar; compassion for weakness.

Even the meekest missionary experiences conflict and anger. The spirit of gentleness moves one to find healthy ways to deal with the anger.

Evangelical Zeal

Although the missionary needs to attend to personal reactions and needs support, the goal of evangelization also has to be kept in mind. One enters the mission to place all of one's talents, energy, creativity, and time at the service of the poor and the Kingdom of God. The missionary who does not move the focus from personal needs to the needs of the poor will eventually become disheartened.

Zeal enables one to accept the challenges of living the gospel in new situations. It animates the missionary to look for ways to overcome obstacles and set-backs. It creates a desire to evangelize and be evangelized by the poor.

Prayer

The primary inspiration for the Vincentian mission is a profound relationship with the missionary Christ, who is encountered among the most poor and abandoned. Since Jesus's presence is not self-evident

²⁵The vows, especially the vow of stability, have the same rationale in the Vincentian tradition. They are a way to maintain fidelity to the mission. By means of the vows one has to keep in mind the fundamental Vincentian option of service of the poor.

and has a sacramental quality about it, only faith permits one to see beyond the ugliness which is so much a part of the lives of the poor. That faith can really be put to the test by the unpleasant side of mission. That is especially true if we expect to find God in beauty, power, or warm, peace-filled experiences. Where is Jesus present in the midst of all this poverty and suffering is not an uncommon question. This is one of the reasons why prayer is so important. It makes us sensitive to the presence of God in the poor.

The call to mission is an invitation to share Christ's life with the poor. Prayer is the means for listening to the concrete demands of that vocation. In prayer Christ questions or affirms our missionary response. He also gives us an opportunity to pour out hearts about the day to day experiences of mission. Without prayer the mission loses its center in Jesus and the missionary winds up reacting to events with only personal lights as a guide. That is a recipe for disaster for oneself and for the poor.

6. Conclusion

Saint Vincent's fundamental insight might be rephrased as the conviction that if you open your life to the poor God steps into the space and will lead you to salvation. No one, certainly not the saint, would say that this vocation is an easy path to joy and happiness. The dark side of the mission is an inescapable fact. But that should not cause disenchantment with the mission or reluctance to accept the burdens of opening one's life to the poor. These are the cost of discipleship. They are the Vincentian participation in the dying and rising of the Lord. That is a message of hope, which has enabled members of the Vincentian family to deal with the dark side of the mission and come to great happiness in the service of the poor.

Eugène Boré and the Bulgarian Catholic Movement

BY

STAFFORD POOLE, C.M.¹

It has long been accepted among historians that nationalism was the dominant force in nineteenth-century Europe. The development of national consciousness among peoples, however, was varied and complex. At times it manifested itself in an attempt to achieve an ethnic identity and independence of foreign rule. At other times it involved a process of unification into a nation-state or an empire. In some countries it took on the characteristics of imperialism. A sense of national identity has often been linked with religious values, as in Ireland and Poland.

For centuries Bulgaria, like most of the Balkans, was under the political and military rule of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, while the Bulgarian Church was subject to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople. As in some other countries nationalism began with a revival of the Bulgarian language and the spread of education. The movement sought to abandon the use of foreign tongues, especially Greek, which was common in commercial centers and among the middle and upper classes. In the nineteenth century the growth of schools with instruction in Bulgarian gave impetus to the movement. Originally, however, this nationalism was cultural, not political, that is, it sought independence of Greek cultural domination, not Turkish political domination.

It had characteristics, however, that were unique. Cultural nationalism became associated with an independent Bulgarian Church and with a short-lived effort to achieve this independence through union with the Roman Catholic Church. This article will deal with one chapter of that history: the role played by Eugène Boré and his fellow priests of the Vincentian Community in this nationalistic rapprochement with Rome.

¹The original version of this paper was given at the annual meeting of American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Monterey, CA, 22 September 1981.



Eugène Boré, C.M. (1809-1878; superior general 1874-1878)

The Romantic Missionary

Eugène Boré was born at Angers, in Anjou, in 1809. He came from a large and very Catholic family. His father, a former Napoleonic army officer, died when the boy was young and the family was left in straitened circumstances. The young Eugène attended boarding and preparatory schools in his home town. He quickly showed an extraordinary aptitude for foreign languages to which he devoted himself with enthusiasm. Because of his family's poverty, however, he had to turn to other quarters for financial assistance for his higher education.

He sought the help of the count de Frayssinous, the minister of ecclesiastical affairs who in 1822 became the Grand Master of the University, the centralized organization of public instruction founded by Napoleon. Boré explained his needs in a series of elegant and faultless Latin verses that so impressed Frayssinous that he awarded the young man a much needed scholarship.

In 1826 Boré entered the Collège Stanislas, a school that had recently been reestablished by the Bourbon monarchy. In that same year he bested the future poet and dramatist Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) in the competitive examinations for all the lycées and colleges of France. Boré then undertook the study of law but found it unsuited to his temperament. He quickly returned to his first love, oriental languages, and began studying them at the Collège de France.

In 1832 Boré encountered the first of two major influences in his life. This was the Abbé Felicité de Lamennais (1782-1854), the man who was to have the most profound and lasting influence on him both personally and intellectually. Lamennais was then at the height of his reputation as the key figure in the rebuilding of the Catholic Church in France after the Bourbon restoration.² He was regarded by his disciples as a new "Father of the Church." Eugène and his brother Léon both became his followers and, when not attending school, lived at the Abbé's retreat, school, and country home at La Chesnaie in Brittany. Eugène became not only a disciple but one of Lamennais's closest friends. There exist some sixty-three letters from Lamennais to Boré. The disciple's name does not usually appear in biographies or histories of Lamennais, at least those in English. This may be because he did not attain the eminence of Jean-Baptiste Lacordaire or Olympe Gerbet, or because so much of his work was done outside of France, or because their complete correspondence has not been available to historians. Yet of all the Abbé's followers, Eugène was the one who was personally the closest to him and remained loyal for the longest time.

In the chaos that followed the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon, the Church in France was still trying to rebuild its organizational life. Traditional methods of priestly formation and Catholic education in general had all but disappeared. In the aftermath people were searching for new approaches to religion. When Lamennais

²Gerard van Winsen, C.M. "La vie et les travaux d'Eugène Boré (1809-1878)." *Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire* 34, no. 2 (1978):81-82.

appeared on the scene, he electrified France with his thought and writing style. "This is a book that will waken the dead," said Frayssinous after reading one of Lamennais's works. Lamennais and his school did not belong to the traditionalist pre-revolutionary system of priestly and intellectual formation. Lamennais was ordained to the priesthood without ever having attended a seminary, and his education in theology was largely that of an autodidact. His great disciple Lacordaire was also largely self-taught, and Boré himself, when he came to embrace the priesthood, had only a few years of systematic theology, largely from private study. Unfortunately, what was gained in flexibility was often lost to instability and lack of organic continuity.

What were the ideas expounded by the new "Father of the Church?" The most important, almost all of which were shared by Boré throughout his life, were the following: (1) the necessity of authority as the basis for certitude in religion; (2) the place of theology in the hierarchy of the sciences; (3) the implications of religion for politics; (4) the condemnation of religious indifference; (5) the freedom of the Church within the state; (6) the need for an educated clergy; (7) the establishment of episcopal synods, parochial missions, and Christian schools for the poor. Lamennais, like Boré after him, saw the disruption of the Catholic religion as the reason for the disruption of contemporary society. And so "Lamennais's sovereign idea or ideal was the social regeneration of France, and indeed, of Europe, through the renaissance of Catholicism."³ The gains of the Revolution should be united with and leavened by Christianity. It was a program that was particularly attractive to romantic young Catholics of the early nineteenth century.

It was from Lamennais, then, that Boré acquired most of the fixed principles that dominated the rest of his life. Foremost among these were: (1) the concept of social regeneration through a renewed Catholicism; (2) separation from the religious authority of Rome inevitably resulted in social and intellectual deterioration and in some cases, such as that of the Armenians, the loss of national independence as well; (3) everything good in history came from Christianity; (4) learning and science were the primary means for bringing men to the truth; (5) the right of freedom of religion was sacred and imprescriptible.

³Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 64.

Lamennais's ideas were not acceptable to the majority of French bishops or to Rome. In 1832 Gregory XVI condemned many of them in the encyclical *Mirari Vos*, calling them "enormous in wickedness." Alienated from the Church, Lamennais eventually renounced Catholicism and never reconciled with it. Leaving the priesthood, he continued various literary and political activities until his death in 1854. Nothing is known of Boré's personal feelings and attitudes throughout the crisis and his master's growing estrangement from the Catholic Church. We do know, however, that he was still corresponding with Lamennais long after the latter had ceased to be a practicing Catholic—the last known letter was dated 31 December 1840, from Julfa, Persia.⁴ This continued attachment seems to have proved embarrassing to Boré's official biographers who attributed it to his desire to bring back his erring master to the right path. This may well be true, but it is also true that Boré—young, romantic, idealistic, and loyal—could not bring himself to abandon one he loved. He regarded both Lacordaire (who had left La Chesnaie in the night, leaving only a note behind) and Gerbet as deserters—even Charles de Montalembert regarded Lacordaire's change of heart as "precipitate." Whereas in later life Boré kept up a correspondence with Montalembert, whom he regarded as a friend, there is no evidence of any resumption of relations with Lacordaire.

While Lamennais was involved in the crisis that eventually led to his renunciation of Catholicism, Boré's career was advancing rapidly. During the cholera epidemic of 1831 in Paris he worked with the victims of the pestilence and though stricken himself, he recovered. In 1833 he was accepted as a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and in the following year he was named substitute professor of Armenian at the Collège de France. He was also an early member of Frédéric Ozanam's Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

In 1834 the French government sent Boré to Venice to advance his knowledge of Armenian with the Mekhitarists, an Armenian order dedicated to the reunion of the separated Armenian churches with Rome. In 1837 the French Minister of Public Instruction, François Guizot, in collaboration with the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, sponsored a journey to Persia. Boré began the expedition with

⁴The anonymous authors of the *Notice bibliographique* state that Boré broke off correspondence with Lamennais in 1836, but later they include the 1840 letter from Persia (*Eugène Boré: XVe Supérieur General de la Congrégation de la Mission: notice bibliographique suivie d'extraits de son journal et de sa correspondance* [Paris: 1879], 5, 75-78).

lengthy stays in Vienna and Trieste. The former had a strong and influential Armenian colony. In December of 1837 he arrived in Constantinople where he lived with an Armenian family.

It was during his six months sojourn in that city that Boré encountered the second great influence in his life: the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. The Congregation's original function had been the giving of rural missions and the operation of diocesan seminaries, not foreign missions. Even in the lifetime of its founder, however, it had undertaken limited mission activities in Scotland, Ireland, and Madagascar. With the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, the French government cast about for successors and replacements in the various foreign missions. The Vincentian superior general, Antoine Jacquier, was reluctant to accept these missions, claiming a lack of qualified personnel, but pressure from the government of Louis XVI soon forced them to replace the French Jesuits in various missions throughout the world. These included the mission and the royal observatory in Peking as well as educational work and missions in the eastern Mediterranean: Naxos, Salonika, Santorini, and Smyrna. In 1782 they established themselves at the mission and college of Saint-Benoît in Constantinople, where they have remained to the present day. These missions were, and in great part have remained outposts of French political influence and culture.

Saint-Benoît had a checkered career, both as school and mission. It was a center of refuge and protection for Armenians and would become a center of the Bulgarian reunion movement. It became, as it still is, a prestigious school for the Turkish upper classes. Boré wrote to his friend, the publisher Eugène Taconet, in 1837, "with what joy I saw, while visiting it, that it was France which, from the point of view of enlightenment and efforts to spread civilization, held the very first rank above all other nations."⁵ Because the Vincentians were also interested in Armenia, one of their number was delegated to accompany Boré on his journey inland.

The journey took the travelers through Turkey and Armenia, as far as Persia. Commenting on what he observed in the Ottoman Empire, he wrote of his brother toward the end of 1838, "I have thrown at my feet all frivolous thoughts of the world . . . and I am firmly decided to work the rest of my days, according to my feeble

⁵Eugène Boré, *Correspondance et Memoires d'un Voyageur en Orient*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1840), 1: 101.

means, to set in place some stones of the great edifice of social reconstruction which is being prepared . . . Perhaps I would be useful to the Catholic Church, outside of which everything decays and declines, as I have seen so clearly in traversing these formerly orthodox countries."⁶

From the political point of view, Boré saw a special mission for France in the Middle East. A major part of that mission was to block the expansion of imperialist Russia and the forces of Orthodoxy. "It is a question of saving a vast part of the Church menaced by a terrible enemy [that is, Russia]."⁷ He used the specter of Russian imperialism to goad the French into accepting their responsibilities in the orient. "France is the temporal patron of Catholicism in the orient. Today there is more need than ever for its support. Besides, if the indefatigable charity of the French assists it with some of its gifts, it will redound to the lasting glory of our fatherland and a great good for the Catholic religion."⁸ His anti-Russian attitude would come into play in the Bulgarian reunion movement.

In Persia Boré hit on two means of extending French and Catholic influence. One was that the French government should send a special embassy to Persia, the other was that the Vincentian community should be entrusted with the direction of a college to be founded at Tabriz. Both proposals were accepted. Before he left Persia, Boré, a man of indefatigable energy and idealism, founded four more schools in the southern part of the country.

By 1842 he was back in Constantinople. In the following year, after refusing the post of French consul in Jerusalem, partly because he was already thinking of entering the priesthood, he paid rapid visits to Paris and Rome. He was still inclined toward the priesthood, despite the fact that Pope Gregory XVI told him that he could do more good as a layman. In 1847 he made a fact-finding tour of the Middle East for the French government, in the course of which he wrote an influential pamphlet, *Mémoire sur les Lieux Saints*. It was an exhaustive study of French claims to patronage over Latin Christians and the shrines in the Holy Land and also an appeal to French nationalism to counterbalance the growing influence of Russia. In the quaint phrasing of the official biography of Boré, "Serious minds had for some time been

⁶To Léon Boré, December 31, 1838, *ibid.*, 2: 107.

⁷To Eugène Taconet, from Saint-Benoît, 27 January 1845, *ibid.*, 2: 212-13.

⁸*Ibid.*, 1: 401-402.

occupied with the all important question of the Holy Places. Everywhere was denounced the effrontery of Russia, seeking to dispossess France of her ancient protectorate and to substitute the Muscovite influence."⁹ Although the matter has not been carefully studied, the reactions of contemporaries seem to indicate that Boré's pamphlet helped to form French popular attitudes toward the question of the Holy Places and consequently to lay the psychological foundation for the Crimean War (1853-1856).

On 28 January 1849 Boré was accepted into the Vincentian Community, though he did not immediately enter the internal seminary (novitiate). On 7 April 1850 he was ordained to the priesthood in Constantinople and on 8 June of that year entered the internal seminary at Paris. Less than a year later he made his vows (29 January 1851) and then accompanied the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Étienne, on a visitation of the houses of the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity in Algeria. In May 1851 he returned to Constantinople as superior of Saint-Benoît and on 6 September was named provincial superior of all the Vincentians in the Near East. Unfortunately Boré was no administrator and his frequent absences from Saint-Benoît prompted much criticism. He had strong ideas and little tolerance for contrary opinions. The complaints and pressure became so great that in 1866 he was recalled to Paris, where he took up the post of secretary general of the Vincentian Community and director of the Daughters of Charity. He narrowly escaped death during the Commune uprising of 1871. In 1874 he was elected superior general, but his generalate was brief and comparatively uneventful. He died on 3 May 1878. His last official act was to sign an order sending a Vincentian missionary to Persia.

The Growth of Bulgarian Nationalism

Bulgarian nationalism began as a literary revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast with nationalism in other nations, it soon came to emphasize religious questions. In Bulgaria political independence or nationhood was a consequence of a spiritual or ecclesiastical independence. In the early nineteenth century Bulgarian religious life was totally dominated by Greek Orthodoxy and the patriarch of Constantinople. The clergy, called Phanariotes from the

⁹*Lives of the Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission* (privately printed, n.d.).



Saint-Benoît in the Nineteenth Century.

region of Constantinople from which they had originally come, relentlessly suppressed the Bulgarian language and native forms of worship. Greek language and literature predominated among the Bulgarians. The clergy, in addition, were notoriously corrupt and venal. As the national consciousness of the Bulgarians grew, so did their resentment of foreign religious domination. Many came to believe that the best means of achieving religious independence was union with the Church of Rome while retaining a distinctive Bulgarian rite. This was especially true after the Crimean War, when Russia's defeat weakened its influence as an effective patron of the Balkan peoples. Some Bulgarian nationalists hoped that rapprochement with Rome would bring them French patronage. Such a move, of course, would have a strong appeal to Boré who saw in it the validation of his own long-held beliefs.

Boré's earliest contact with this movement was in the person of Dragan Tsankov (1827-1911), a leading Bulgarian intellectual who had been educated in Vienna. Tsankov came to Constantinople in 1854 and there worked for a free and independent Bulgarian state. He and Boré quickly became close friends. With Boré's help, Tsankov was able to bypass the obstructionism of the Sublime Porte (as the government of the Ottoman Empire was called) and to establish a press at Saint-Benoît. He was soon publishing a journal, *Bulgaria*, to which Boré often contributed articles. The magazine, which appeared from

1859 until 1861, openly attacked the Greek patriarchate, sometimes in virulent fashion, refuted oriental prejudices against Catholicism, and strove to show that the Bulgarians could obtain religious emancipation only through the pope. The Orthodox, in turn, answered through their own journals. Some months after the appearance of the first issue of *Bulgaria*, Tsankov converted to Catholicism and took up a post as a teacher at Saint-Benoît.

Tsankov's conversion led to others and the movement toward union seemed to be gathering momentum. Some observers, like Boré and Brunoni, the Latin vicar in Constantinople, realize that politics and nationalism were playing paramount roles in this movement. They seem to have hoped, however, that religious good would come out of this sometimes uneasy alliance. Boré, for his part, learned Bulgarian and for years there was a Bulgarian rite Sunday liturgy at Saint-Benoît.

In July 1859, representatives of some ten thousand Orthodox Bulgarians of Kilkis, a town about thirty miles north of Salonika (where the Vincentians had a house) approached one of the Latin missionaries. They asked him to send a letter to the pope, requesting permission for them to affiliate with the Roman Church while retaining their own rite. Boré immediately went to Kilkis to investigate the situation at first hand, and partly through his instrumentality their request was granted. Throughout 1859 more Bulgarian separatists continued to petition union from Brunoni and from the Armenian Catholic patriarch in Constantinople. Brunoni had doubts about the motivations of the Bulgarians, but Rome was entranced with the possibilities of mass union.

In December 1860 a Bulgarian priest was exiled by the Greek Metropolitan of Varna for having had himself ordained by a Bulgarian prelate in Constantinople. In order to flee the persecution of the Greeks, he took refuge in Saint-Benoît and then became a Catholic. In the same month occurred one of the major events of the union process. On 30 December, two archimandrites, Makariji Savov and Josif Sokolski, together with one hundred and twenty lay people, petitioned the Latin vicar and the Armenian Catholic patriarch for admission to the Church of Rome. They were acting in the name of two thousand of their compatriots in Constantinople. The petition was accepted. An act of union was signed by Tsankov and a statement issued on behalf of the papacy that Bulgarian Catholics would have an autonomous hierarchy (long one of their demands of the Greeks) and that nothing more

would be required of them beyond the stipulations for union laid down in the Council of Florence (1439). This group was soon followed by one hundred and forty-eight families in Adrianople and the region of Monastir in Macedonia.

The Porte, with which Boré had strong influence, shared his view that the union with Rome would weaken Bulgarian connections with Russia. This was confirmed by the vigorous protests lodged by the tsar's government against the union and the subsequent Russian efforts to thwart it. The Ottoman government, however, recognized the autonomy of the Bulgarian hierarchy in 1870. Makariji was appointed ecclesiastical head of the Bulgarian Catholic community and Tsankov its civil head. Brunoni established a Committee of Bulgarian Union to assist the converts, with Boré as one of its chief members. With funds supplied by the French ambassador and the Roman Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, a church of the Catholic Bulgarian rite was established in Galata. There, in January 1861, the first Catholic Bulgarian Eucharist was offered. In that same year Boré established a Bulgarian seminary in connection with Saint-Benoît.

Boré was enthusiastic about the movement but not naively so. The romantic young nationalist of twenty years before had been tempered in the forge of experience. Pope Pius IX, on the other hand, was overly sanguine about the possibilities of total union. Reports of further union movements in other parts of Bulgaria encouraged him. In January 1861, he wrote to Boré to ask him to accompany Sokolski to Rome because the Pope had decided to consecrate the archimandrite as an archbishop. Boré, like some others, felt that the Pope was acting too hastily. In addition to the fact that the archimandrite, who had been a *haiduk* or anti-Turkish bandit before becoming a monk, was seventy-five years old, he seemed too ambitious to Boré, even to the point of wanting to be made a patriarch. (Pius IX supposedly told him, "When you have half a million Bulgarians reunited with Rome, I will give you a patriarch.")¹⁰ On 8 April 1861, Pius IX personally consecrated the Bulgarian at a ceremony in the Sistine Chapel. Boré had accompanied Sokolski as interpreter and had also translated the entire ceremony into Bulgarian. Sokolski was given the further title of vicar apostolic of Bulgaria and was showered with every sign of papal good will.

¹⁰Van Winsen, "La vie," 86.

Sokolski made a triumphal return to Constantinople where his new position was officially certified by a government decree. The prospects for wholesale reunion now seemed brighter than ever. Less than two months later, however, Sokolski disappeared and shortly afterward a letter, purportedly written by him from Russia, announced his abandonment of Catholicism and urged his countrymen to do the same. This seemed to confirm some of Boré's worst suspicions. The despair of the Bulgarian Catholic community was lightened some years later when it was discovered that the archbishop had been kidnapped by tsarist agents. Sokolski's role and attitudes in all this, however, are still vague and suspect.

The situation was not helped when Rome appointed a Latin rite Bulgarian, unsympathetic to the oriental rites, as head of the Bulgarian Catholic community in Constantinople. By the time a member of the Bulgarian rite was appointed in 1865, the fortunes of the Catholic community in Constantinople had ebbed. They were reduced to a few hundred people and a single priest. The principal focus of activity shifted to Macedonia and Thrace. The last Bulgarian rite Catholic archbishop in Constantinople died in 1925.

In the 1870s the Bulgarians turned to revolution as the means to achieve independence. An uprising in 1876 was suppressed by the Turks with such ferocity that it aroused public opinion throughout Europe. Tsankov, who had opposed the uprising, toured the courts of Europe to seek support for Bulgarian autonomy. Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire and by the treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878) compelled it to recognize an autonomous Bulgaria with extensive borders. France, Britain, and Germany forced a revision of the terms by the treaty of Berlin (13 July 1878) that recognized a territorially reduced Bulgaria as an autonomous unit under a vague Ottoman sovereignty. Tsankov helped to draft a constitution, one of the most democratic in Europe, and a nephew of the tsar, Alexander of Battenberg (whose English descendants anglicized the name to Mountbatten), became prince.

The Vincentians in Macedonia

After Boré's recall in 1866, Macedonia became the center of Vincentian activity among Bulgarian rite Catholics. In addition to the house at Salonika, another was founded in Monastir specifically to help the Bulgarians. In 1883 Thrace and Macedonia were made vicari-

ates apostolic. Lazar Mladenov, a Vincentian and the first vicar apostolic of Macedonia, was consecrated a bishop. Two years later a boys school at Zeitenlik that had been conducted by the Vincentians was changed into a minor seminary for Bulgarians, with Saint-Benoît continuing to be the major seminary. In 1889 the Vincentians began the establishment of an order of Bulgarian nuns, the Eucharistines. By 1892 a large number of the Vincentians were transferring to the Bulgarian rite.

In 1894 this entire movement collapsed, never to recover. Bulgaria came more and more under Russian influence, as the tsarist government cast itself in the role of champion of all slavic peoples. Eventually Bulgarian independence owed as much to Russia as to any other single factor. A sustained campaign by the Orthodox Exarch, strongly supported by the government, played on the nationalism of the Bulgarians and equated Catholicism with the loss of nationality. Large numbers returned to Orthodoxy with the same ease with which they had left it. Even Bishop Mladenov himself made a short return to Orthodoxy but soon recanted and eventually settled in Rome, where he lived in retirement. It became obvious that the Bulgarian Catholic rite, for the majority of the people, lacked any deep roots. There had not been sufficient time to prepare an educated clergy. The spirit of nationalism, first manifested in a revolt against Greek ecclesiastical dominance, now turned against Roman dominance as well.

Dragan Tsankov also repudiated the union and returned to Orthodoxy. He was active in the new Bulgarian government, holding the offices of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister. The tumultuous conditions of Bulgarian politics eventually led him to retire to Saint Petersburg, where he died in 1911.

Conclusions

The movement of Bulgarian union was more nationalistic and political than it was religious. The combination of cultural, political, and nationalistic factors that gave birth to it also doomed it to death.

Additional Readings

Eugène Boré: *l'homme privé, l'homme public, les voyages, les oeuvres, d'après un témoin de sa vie avec des nombreux extraits des souvenirs personnels de Boré*. Lille: undated.

"Notes sur la vie de M. Boré." *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 43 (1878):352-464; 521-678; 44 (1879):8-103.

Poole, Stafford. "Eugene Bore and the Vincentian Mission in the Near East." *Vincentian Heritage* 5, no. 1 (1984):59-102.

Rallaye, Léonce de la. *Eugène Boré et les origines de la question d'Orient*. Paris: 1894.

The impact of it on the average person was superficial. Life went on in the villages, no matter what ecclesiastical authority they accepted.

The movement constituted a relatively small part of Boré's career but it was consistent with the rest of his life. He saw verified in it his own hopes and dreams. He was, however, by that time of his life more realistic than he had been in his youth. He learned prudence and caution and it was no fault of his that the movement did not continue. There is no doubt that the hopes for mass reunion that were entertained in Rome were unrealistic. A vast return of dissident churches has always been a dream of Rome, and in the days when the Church was being strongly buffeted in Europe, the Bulgarian movement seemed a ray of hope. It proved a false dawn.

The Bulgarian Catholic communities were reduced to even further extremities by the Balkan Wars and the First World War. They now number but a few thousand scattered throughout Macedonia, northern Greece, and Istanbul.

In the summer of 1980, while staying at Saint-Benoît, this author had the pleasure of meeting an eighty-eight year old Vincentian priest named Dimitri Bogdanov. He carried the title of Archimandrite of the Bulgarians. He was the last successor to Boré, still working in the same college in which Boré sought union with the Bulgarians. With his death in 1984 the Vincentian ministry to the Catholic Bulgarians came to an end.



Dimitri Bogdanov, C.M. (1895-1984), last Vincentian archimandrite of the Catholic Bulgarians, with the author, Istanbul, August, 1980.



The Cause for the Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.

BY

THOMAS DAVITT, C.M.

John Gabriel Perboyre was executed in China on 11 September 1840. On 9 July 1843 a decree of Pope Gregory XVI authorized the introduction of the causes for beatification of forty-three martyrs, including Francis Régis Clet and John Gabriel. John Gabriel's cause was separated from the others, because of the amount of documentation, evidence of witnesses and graces received. On 10 November 1889 Pope Leo XIII beatified him. His liturgical commemoration was originally celebrated on 7 November, but in the last revision of the calendar it was changed to 11 September, the anniversary of his death.

In 1891 a decree was issued authorizing the resumption of the cause, with a view to canonization. At that time two miracles attributed to the intercession of the beatified person were required for canonization. In the case of John Gabriel the two allegedly miraculous cures both involved Daughters of Charity, Sisters Gabrielle Isoré and Joseph Destailleux. Medical experts examined the cures and gave their opinion in 1897. There were further comments, questions, and answers during 1900-1902, and then the revised medical opinion was submitted in 1902.

In the correspondence between the postulator general and the superior general it was taken almost for granted that this would be accepted without any problems. In one of the Dublin Vincentian houses a stained glass window was installed with "St John Gabriel Perboyre" on it. However, it is interesting to note that in the superior general's New Year circular letters there is no indication of such a degree of expectancy. In the letter of 1900 it is said that the cause had received a momentary setback but that there was nothing to worry about. In that of the following year it was reported that the cause was moving forward. In the *Annales de la Mission* around that time there was no reference to John Gabriel's canonization in the immediate future.

The new *Positio* was discussed at a preparatory congregation on 28 April 1903, and objections were raised. There were twenty-one members voting and on the allegedly miraculous cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré, the only one of interest now (see below), nine voted affirmatively, four negatively, six abstained, and two abstained pending further expert medical opinion. The reason for the negative votes and abstentions was a doubt as to whether the illnesses of the two sisters were organic or functional. "Functional" would mean the illness had a hysterical basis, and therefore the apparently instantaneous cure could be natural and not miraculous. The result of the voting was presented to Leo XIII by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Serafino Cretoni. The Pope decided that two more experts should be appointed to undertake further investigation. It seems that for many years after this disappointment no further move was made by the Congregation of the Mission.

Once again it is interesting that neither in the superior general's New Year's letter of 1904 nor in the *Annales* of that year is there any reference to the disappointment. In 1943 new norms were promulgated about presenting alleged miracles, but at that time the Second World War was still going on.

In 1959 the sponsor of the cause approached the Promoter General of the Faith with a view to moving the cause forward. He asked Professor Vincenzo Lo Bianco to reexamine the evidence. The professor's conclusion was that with the long lapse of time since the original diagnosis he could not, from the documents, make a "definite diagnosis." In 1969 and 1983 there were new Apostolic Constitutions on canonization. The second one decreed that only one miracle was now needed for canonizing a beatified person.

In 1993 Father Giuseppe Guerra, C.M., the postulator general, decided that of the two alleged miracles voted on in 1903 the cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré had the better chance of succeeding as it was better documented. All the documentation on it was given by the Congregation for the Saints to two medical experts, Professor Franco De Rosa and Professor Cristoforo Morocutti for reevaluation. The decision of the former was that the instantaneous cure of Sister Gabrielle merited discussion at a meeting of the medical commission, while that of the latter was that the cure was inexplicable. The medical commission discussed it at their meeting on 17 November 1994 and their unanimous opinion was that the cure was inexplicable according to current medical knowledge. The case was then passed on to the theo-

logians, and once again the decision was affirmative. Finally, on 6 April 1995 the decree for the canonization of John Gabriel, along with those for other beatifications and canonizations, was read in the presence of the pope, and now (July 1995) all that remains is for a date to be set for the canonization ceremony, with late 1996 seeming to be the most likely time.

The Cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré, D.C.

According to the documentation of the process Céline Isoré was born "in Quaid-Ypres in northern France" in 1851. In 1871 she entered the Daughters of Charity and was known as Sister Gabrielle. Her first appointment was to the hospital in Nivelles, then to Ghent in Belgium for home care of the sick and then to Héverlé near Leuven to teach in a girls' school. During all this time she enjoyed good health. After fourteen years in Héverlé she began to get ill, in February-March 1889. She began to experience pains in her feet, then right up her back, intermittent at first but later continuous. Her movements became gradually restricted, and eventually this necessitated her being confined to bed. The sisters judged her condition to be rheumatic, and treated her accordingly. But her condition got worse, and the doctor, Joseph Boine, was called in for the first time in July. He was the only doctor who saw her during the period of her illness. She suffered also from insomnia and urinary and respiratory problems. From September she was also partially paralyzed in her lower limbs.

On 2 November her sister servant (superior) arranged with a priest of the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus Fathers) for a novena of prayer and masses for Sister Gabrielle's cure through the intercession of John Gabriel Perboyre, to end on 10 November, the day on which he was to be beatified. On the 9th the doctor saw her as usual; he said later that he had by then given up all hope of her recovery and expected her to die soon.

On the 9th, at 11:30 in the evening, she fell asleep without any medication and slept till 4:30 the following morning, something that had not happened before. When she woke up she had no pains, could move normally and was able to get up, dress herself and go down to the chapel. In the chapel she cried out "I'm either off my head or I've been completely cured." She stayed for mass with the others, then went to the refectory and ate a normal breakfast.

Doctor Boine's diagnosis, which he put in writing for the sister servant, was that Sister Gabrielle was suffering from a severe form of myelitis. When the medical experts discussed the case in 1891-92, with a view towards the introduction of the cause for canonization, they came to the conclusion that she had suffered from ascending spinal leptomeningitis of a sub-acute form. Two other experts, though, tended towards accepting a hysterical basis for her condition. (She was still alive at that time; she died in 1906). At the voting on her cure in 1903 the eight members who abstained did so because they were not completely satisfied that her illness had been organic; they thought there was a possibility it had had a hysterical element. If the latter was true then her instantaneous cure could have been merely natural and not inexplicable.

In 1959 Professor Lo Bianco felt that after such a lapse of time he could not give a definite diagnosis from the evidence available to him.

In 1993 the documentation was once again submitted to medical experts, Professors Franco De Rosa and Cristoforo Morocutti. The former said the case was worth discussion by a medical commission, especially the instantaneous nature of her cure; the latter gave a positive opinion on the inexplicable nature of the cure.

Professor Morocutti first dealt with the possibility of hysterical illness. He decided that from what was known of the sister before her illness a hysterical basis was unlikely. Also, it would be unusual for someone aged thirty-eight to develop such a hysterical condition for the first time.

He did not agree with Doctor Boine's diagnosis of myelitis, as many of the symptoms associated with that illness were not mentioned in the documentation as being present. He thought the diagnosis made in 1891-92 of spinal leptomeningitis was more probable. But here again he noted that in the documents there was no evidence of the presence of symptoms he would have expected if that were the correct diagnosis. Not only that, he also noticed reference to the presence of signs which should not have been there if that were the correct diagnosis.

He then gave as his final opinion that the most probably correct diagnosis of Sister Gabrielle's illness would be ascending polyneuritis, the Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS); more recently this has been called acute idiopathic polyradiculopathy.

His report was dated 9 June 1994. It was accepted by the medical commission on 5 December 1994.

Votre très-humb. serviteur .
Vincent Desaul
indigne prêtre de la Mission

Book Review

DEEP DOWN THINGS:
SELECTED WRITINGS OF REVEREND RICHARD McCULLEN, C.M.
 NEW YORK: NEW CITY PRESS, 1995. 784 pp.

Deep Down Things, a collection of almost 300 letters, homilies, and talks penned by Richard McCullen during his twelve years as superior general of the worldwide Vincentian communities, is at the same time personal and global; contemporary and historical; inspirational and practical; religious and secular; learned and popular. Chronologically arranged from 1980-1992, the book is directed principally to the extended Vincentian family, including Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and other charitable organizations who continue the vision of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The book, however, has relevance and appeal for a wider audience. The author's lyrical style and rich imagery, reflective of his Irish lineage, will appeal to those who demand literary craftsmanship and artistry as well as solid content. The fluid prose and the economical structure (very few entries exceed three pages) as well as the practical turn of the spirituality reveal a mature author who has passed through several decades of theological study, prayerful reflection, and pastoral service.

The title *Deep Down Things* is drawn from the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and captures well the effect of the book on the reader. One is quietly invited to penetrate everyday events and encounters, and especially Scripture, to discover the essential, the "thisness" which binds all creation and human experience with its Source and Destiny. The spiritual commentaries are carefully woven through or drawn out of events as diverse as earthquakes in Mexico and Italy, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the celebration of the jubilee year in Rome, participation in a synod, a pilgrimage to Knock, the emergence of indigenous communities in Africa, and beatification/canonization proceedings. The original audiences for these writings circle the globe from Ireland to Indonesia, Cameroon to China, Salzburg to Saint Louis, Berlin to Bolivia, Prague to the Philippines, and a multiplicity of other locations within first and third worlds, free

nations and oppressed countries. Personal experiences such as an excursion to Mayan temples in Guatemala or a visit to the Roman church of San Andrea delle Fratte, with its associations with both Alphonse Ratisbonne and Maximilian Kolbe, successfully fuse the travel and devotional genres.

A few basic themes echo fugue-like throughout the various chapters of the book which approaches 800 pages. While the contexts differ, the Eucharist as the center of life and Mary as the model of discipleship, as well as Saint Vincent de Paul's special view of the poor, are explored in a variety of ways. The author's treatment of these subjects as well as his creative walking through the gospel parables often evoke that experience Eliot referred to as *making the familiar strange and the strange familiar*. It is the experience one has when an interpretation seems so obvious and apt, that one is delighted and yet surprised at not having thought of it oneself.

While the gamut of virtues have their place in Father McCullen's writings, he is particularly insistent on two qualities for effective Christian living. In a very Chestertonian way, he posits the need for a sense of awe and wonder to go "deep down things" and find the Spirit in the beauties of nature, the complexity of the psyche, and the meaning of the cross. Secondly, he places reconciliation at the pinnacle of human graces required for peace at the personal, interpersonal, and even international levels. He constantly invites the reader to reflect on the dignity of the human person and the effect of the Incarnation. While insisting on work for justice, he cautions that those who work for justice cannot pit one class against another or foment anger and contempt.

This book can be sampled, read in generous allotments, savored in carefully chosen topics, or studied chronologically. The style of the prose is very personal and original, but two distinctive methods of development recur frequently. In one, an experience, at times the author's but more often that of an historical, scriptural or literary figure, is narrated and then the contemporary significance of that event from the gospel perspective is explored. On the feast of the Magi, a fictional interview with a decidedly modern flavor is conducted with the Kings and on the occasion of the beatification of two Daughters of Charity martyred at Angers in 1794, their seventeenth-century foundress engages in a soliloquy.

In the second method, to make a spiritual point the author selects and explores, from a variety of perspectives, a concrete image (stained

glass to consumerism-clogged arteries). Many of these images derive from personal experiences while others are drawn from the poets, particularly the metaphysical poets, Hopkins, and Eliot. However, prose writers such as Chesterton, Cardinal Newman, Ronald Knox, and others find their way into his commentaries as well. This storehouse of literary allusions and carefully chosen images provide the memory hook that allows the listener or the reader to retain the message and in the worshiper's case, carry the homily from Sunday to Sunday. To recall the image or the reference, the part, is to remember the whole.

While the book will be most valued within the Vincentian families, it offers much to persons who are interested in religious formation and spirituality. Because the collection includes a large number of homilies developed by a talented preacher, it could serve as a very useful tool for those who preach and those who teach homiletics. Despite the careful editing, one does regret that a glossary was not provided to assist readers both within and outside the Vincentian family to orient themselves to the variety of historical and contemporary personalities alluded to throughout the text. However, this is not even a small deterrent to traveling "deep down things" and discovering in these pages, along with the Jesuit Hopkins and the Vincentian McCullen, the Holy Spirit brooding with "warm breast" and with very "bright wings."

Distributors of the book may be contacted at: The McCullen Project, 333 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727, phone: 301-447-3121. The price is \$25.00, plus \$3.50 for postage and handling.

Sister Margaret John Kelly, DC
Executive Director
Vincentian Center for Church & Society
Saint John's University
Jamaica, NY 11439

It is only God alone who can make us abandon all, wretched creatures that we are and objects of his justice, that we may become the objects of his love. O happy change! To abandon an earthly love for a love that is heavenly, eternal, and utterly divine!

*(Saint Vincent de Paul,
conference to the Daughters of Charity, conference #18)*

You must place your trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the father of the poor.

*(Saint Louise de Marillac to Sister Julienne Loret,
19 September 1651, letter 327)*

Newsnotes

Sister Daniel Hannefin, D.C.

Sister Daniel Hannefin died in Saint Louis on 18 June 1995 at the age of sixty-seven. A native of Saint Louis, she entered the Daughters of Charity in 1947 and received a bachelor's degree in history at Fontbonne College and a master's degree in English at Loyola University in Chicago. She taught elementary school in Missouri and California and also spent eight years in social work in Chicago. She was later a pastoral minister at DePaul Hospital in Saint Louis and Saint Paul Medical Center in Dallas.

From 1980 to 1993 she was archivist for the West Central Province of the Daughters of Charity. For all those interested in the history of the Daughters of Charity and for Vincentian studies in general, she will be remembered for her book *Daughters of the Church: A Popular History of the Daughters of Charity in the United States 1809-1987* published in 1989 by the New City Press. Sister Daniel worked closely with the Vincentian Studies Institute in preparing that work. The Institute extends its deepest sympathy to her surviving sisters and the Daughters of Charity of the West Central Province.

Books

In addition to *Deep Down Things*, reviewed in this issue, there are the following publications that deal with Vincentian studies.

The fifth volume of *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, edited by Sister Marie Poole, D.C., has been published and is available from the Vincentian Translation Project, Saint Joseph's Provincial House, 333 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727.

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings, edited by John Rybolt, C.M., and Frances Ryan, D.C., is now available from Paulist Press as a part of their Classics of Western Spirituality Series. Cloth: \$24.95, paper: \$18.95. To order contact Paulist Press at 997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, NJ, 07430. To order by phone call: (201) 825-7300, or Fax: 1-800-836-3161.

Praying with Louise de Marillac by Audrey Gibson, D.C., and Kieran

Kneaves, D.C., both members of the Vincentian Studies Institute, has just been published. The publisher's summary says of Saint Louise that she "knew the pain and suffering of God's poor people." This valuable work is available from Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320. Toll free phone: 1-800-533-8095. Toll free FAX 1-800-344-9225. 120 pp., \$7.95.

Vicente de Dios, *Vicente de Paúl: Biografía y espiritualidad*, Mexico: Librería Parroquial de Clavería, 1991.

Philippe Guillaume, *Saint Vincent de Paul: L'Ambassadeur des pauvres*. Monte Carlo: Les Editions de Radio Monte Carlo: 1988.

Daniel E. Pilario, C.M. *Knowing the Tree by its Leaves: Re-reading St. Vincent de Paul in the Philippine Context*. Manila: Congregation of the Mission, 1993.

Fernando Espiago, C.M. *A la Misión del Cielo el Martirio, Sacerdotes y Hermanos Paúles Mártires (1934-1939)*. Vicepostulación en España-Padres Paúles, 1995.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M. *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*. New York: New City Press, 1995.

Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M., and Antonino Orcajo, C.M. *The way of Saint Vincent is our way*. The English translation of this 1986 Spanish work of contemporary Vincentian meditations has been prepared and published by the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission. Copies can be obtained from the provincial offices: 500 East Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

Jaime Corera, C.M. *El signo de los tiempos. Contribución a una teología vincenciana de la liberación*. Madrid: Editorial La Milagrosa, 1995.

Journals

The journal *Vincentiana*, which offers a variety of materials from official announcements to historical studies and obituaries, will now appear in separate language editions. The cost is \$40.00 per year. Subscriptions to the English edition may be ordered from:

VINCENTIANA
Congregazione della Missione
Via dei Capasso 30
00164 Roma, Italy
Fax 011-396-666-3831

A recent issue contains the article by the superior general, Robert P. Maloney, "Mental Prayer: Yesterday and Today. Some Reflections on the Vincentian Tradition." *Vincentiana* 39, no. 2 (March-April 1995).

The spring, 1995, issue of *Colloque*, the journal of the Irish province of the Congregation of the Mission, contains of a number of articles of interest. There is a translation of Vincent de Paul's conference of 17 May 1658 on the keeping of the rules. Three articles deal with different aspects of Vincent de Paul's spirituality and teaching. Eamon Flanagan writes on "St Vincent on Pardon," which emphasizes the place of God's mercy in Vincent's thought. Richard McCullen's talk on "St Vincent and Prayer" is reprinted as is Mark Noonan's "St Vincent de Paul: Our Model and Patron." Thomas Davitt's article on "Irishmen in the Congregation of the Mission during the Founder's Lifetime" surveys an important but relatively little known aspect of Vincentian history. Two articles deal with the Vincentian experience in and contribution to parish work: Kevin Lawlor, "'Our Kind of People': What a Vincentian Parish ought to be about" and Thomas Bennett, "St Cedd's, Goodmayes, 1966-1994."

Gerard van Winsen, C.M. "Le dossier du Père Vincent Lebbe à la Curie généralice (Rome) de la Congrégation de la Mission (Lazaristes) (II)," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 51, 1 (1995): 31-60. Lebbe was a pioneering and controversial Vincentian Missionary in China in the early part of this century. This article is a catalogue of the documents concerning him in the archives of the Vincentian generalate in Rome.





